

PUTINISM

THE SLOW RISE *of a* RADICAL RIGHT REGIME IN RUSSIA

MARCEL H. VAN HERPEN



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Marcel H. Van Herpen

Director, The Cicero Foundation, the Netherlands

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*To Anna Politkovskaya (1958–2006)
and Natalya Estemirova (1958–2009)*

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Introduction

Defining Putin's system

Between 1999 and 2012 Putin was the undisputed ruler of Russia and, at this moment, his rule does not seem likely to come to an end any time soon. After his comeback as Russian President in 2012 he has theoretically the possibility of remaining in power for another 12 years, which would make his reign longer than that of Leonid Brezhnev (18 years) or Tsar Nicholas II (22 years). Putin not only dominates the political scene in Russia, but also plays an equally prominent role on the global stage. Queen Elizabeth II received him at Buckingham Palace while on a state visit to the United Kingdom and he was invited to the G7 when this forum was still a rather closed Western club. Western leaders were so impressed with him that US President Bush, after having looked him in the eye, got a "sense of his soul," finding him "straightforward and trustworthy."¹ Former German Chancellor Helmut Schröder and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi became his buddies and the American magazine *Time* chose him in 2007 as 'Person of the Year'. Putin was praised in the West for his pragmatism and for having restored order after the chaotic Yeltsin years. Although his democratic credentials were less obvious, his friend Schröder did not hesitate to call him a 'lupenreiner Demokrat' (crystal clear democrat). And even as late as 2011 French Prime Minister François Fillon repeated that Russia was a democracy.

However, after 12 years of Putinism it is clear that calling Putin a democrat and his system a democracy is a full-blown lie. Therefore, Western observers have become more cautious. Most admit now that Russia is not a democracy. However, this does not mean that all have given up their wishful thinking, hoping that things will turn out better under Putin's third term as Russian President. Maybe Putin is not a democrat today,

they argue, but this does not mean that he could not *become* an exemplary democrat tomorrow. Christopher Caldwell, a columnist of the *Financial Times*, wrote, for instance, that “there may be liberalising tendencies in Mr. Putin’s camp.”² Caldwell is not alone. Jacob Heilbrunn, an American analyst, exclaimed in October 2011, after 12 years of Putinism, “Might not Putin turn out to be a closet democrat who revives his country over the next decade?”³ Others argued that, “once reinstalled in the Kremlin, Mr. Putin would reinvent himself as an economic liberal with a repressive streak (a Russian Pinochet, in effect).”⁴ This last vision still has the elegance of restricting Putin’s supposed liberalism to his economic performance, although it is clear that the kleptocratic economic system he has put in place cannot be liberalized without removing the kleptocrats, that is, Putin himself, together with his siloviki clan.

What is striking in these rosy expectations is that they completely *contradict* the trend of the last 12 years. This trend has been characterized by a growing repression and a continuous centralization of power. Countervailing powers, from the independent TV stations to the elected governors, were brought under the Kremlin’s control and in September 2010 even Yuriy Luzhkov, the all-too-powerful mayor of Moscow, was dismissed. Democratic procedures were baffled and the secret services strengthened their grip on civil society, using the “extremism law” to persecute political opponents. Bloggers can get up to six years in prison and since 2010 the FSB, the follow-up organization of the Soviet-era KGB, can also “invite” citizens and give them “warnings,” reviving a practice used by its Soviet predecessor.

Why do Western observers and analysts—despite ample evidence of the contrary—insist that Putin’s third Presidential term (his fourth when we include the “unofficial” term between 2008 and 2012) will give him a chance “to reinvent” himself? Did other dictators and authoritarian leaders, such as Saddam Hussein, Muammar Kadafi, Hosni Mubarak, or Benito Mussolini, “reinvent” themselves? It is not the first time in recent history that wishful thinking takes the place of a cool analysis of the facts. In the 1920s and 1930s similar hopes and expectations were expressed vis-à-vis the possible development of the dictatorships of that epoch. These optimistic expectations, however, were not fulfilled because they not only denied the facts, but also neglected the immanent *dynamic* of these dictatorships, as many had to learn later by bitter experience.

Putinism can be expected to be with us for at least another six years, and possibly even 12. It is, therefore, of vital importance, not only to understand how the Putinist system works, but also to have a grasp of its deeper dynamic. The thesis of this book is that Putin is far from a “closet

democrat” and that in the coming decade Putinism least of all will be characterized by “liberalising tendencies.” On the contrary, the dynamic of the system points to another direction: that of a strengthening grip on civil society, a further repression of individual freedoms, combined with an aggressive foreign policy in the post-Soviet space, possibly including revisionist territorial claims. Helped by its oil and gas dollars, Putinism, with the help of well-paid Western communication firms, has tried to build a positive image in the West, concealing its growing authoritarianism behind its status of an “electoral democracy.” Another name for such a system is “competitive authoritarianism.”⁵ “In competitive authoritarian regimes,” wrote Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, “formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority. Incumbents violate those rules so often and to such an extent, however, that the regime fails to meet the conventional minimum standards for democracy.”⁶ These authors assume that such systems have also a positive side: “the persistence of meaningful democratic institutions creates arenas through which opposition forces may—and frequently do—pose significant challenges.”⁷ In Putin’s Russia, where politics has become a stagnant, dead water, and where the opposition has been permanently excluded from competition, there was hope that such “significant challenges” were possible after the massive street protests in the winter of 2011–2012. The prospects, however, are bleak. The Putinist regime, strengthened by its newfound “legitimacy” after the rigged and fraudulent elections, will fight tooth and nail to defend its power and privileges.

The purported lack of democratic ambition of the “Russian character”

Western experts often show a tendency to consider the persistence of authoritarian regimes in Russia the result of a supposed “Russian character.” For the anthropologist Margaret Mead, for instance, there existed a “traditional Russian character structure,” which was “prone to extreme swings in mood from exhilaration to depression, hating confinement and authority, and yet feeling that strong external authority was necessary to keep their own violent impulses in check.”⁸ Recently, Richard Pipes, a prominent American historian and Russia expert, wrote a letter to the *Economist* in the same vein in which he referred to an article in this magazine in which was said that the Kremlin often defends its actions “by pointing to the ‘mindlessness’ of Russians and the lack of a strong civil society.” “Unfortunately,” wrote Pipes,

"this is largely correct. The great majority of Russians display no interest in politics, for they regard all politicians, at home as well as abroad, as crooks. How politicians get themselves elected and how they rule is of little or no interest to Russians, as long as they protect them from domestic and foreign enemies. This mentality enables their rulers to act with impunity under the guise of "managed democracy" and bodes ill for Russia's future."⁹ Interestingly, Pipes wrote these words under the heading "the coming Russian winter" just a few weeks before the mass protest demonstrations started in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. In fact, these theories are only new expressions of the old maxim: "Each people gets the government it deserves," blaming the people for the misbehavior of their governments. The fact that the Russian people was not yet able to constitute itself as a "Body Politic" is certainly due to the historical legacy of 70 years of totalitarian rule. A historical legacy, however, is not a fatality. We should not forget that the Yeltsin years of the 1990s, generally characterized as "chaotic," were also the most democratic years in Russian history. It was Putin, a product and an exponent of the repressive Soviet KGB, who intentionally and willfully derailed this process. That the great majority of Russians "display no interest in politics," as Richard Pipes suggests, is not because of a supposed inborn disinterest in the *res publica*, but because the *res publica* has been stolen by the occupant of the Kremlin and his clan.

A counter-example of this "lack of interest"

A clear counter-example of the supposed "lack of political interest" of the Russian citizens cannot only be found in the recent mass protests, but also in the short period in which elections for the provincial governors and republican presidents of Russia's sub-national units were held. When Russian citizens still had the possibility of voting and felt that their vote had a real impact, they showed a genuine interest. "Despite the rhetoric surrounding the Putin administration's decision to eliminate popular elections, the contests held from 1996 through 2001," wrote Andrew Konitzer, "yielded an element of accountability and seemed to outperform the system of appointees in neighboring Ukraine."¹⁰ However, when between 2001 and 2004 Putin's central government began to interfere, "the regional electorate appeared to lose interest in a process increasingly controlled by the Kremlin."¹¹ Putin took the Beslan school hostage crisis of September 2004 as a pretext to suppress the regional elections altogether and appoint the governors directly. Abolition of democracy on a regional level was accompanied by the transformation

of national elections into a manipulated farce. Opposition parties were not only refused registration, they were harassed and marginalized. As a result Russians began more and more to vote with their feet. After Putin's announcement in the fall of 2011 that he would be a candidate for the Presidential elections of 2012, Lev D. Gudkov, director of the Levada Center, an independent pollster, said that about 50,000 people leave Russia every year and that this number could grow by 10,000 or 15,000 in the future. "There will be a dark and depressive mood in society," Mr. Gudkov said. "The situation is uncertain, there is a growth of anxiety, a feeling of stagnation and degradation."¹² Russians not only emigrate abroad: as in old Soviet times they also go into "internal emigration." According to Andrei Zolotov Jr., deputy director of the international service of the RIA Novosti news agency, "there is the feeling of not fitting into the system, a sense of alienation that nothing really depends on you, that you don't matter (...) and that results in what is called internal emigration. You stop watching television, you retreat into your private life, you disconnect from the country around you."¹³ And there is this fear from the past, "this fear: what if they close the borders? That is one of the fears in the background."¹⁴

According to *The Economist*, Putin's return in 2012, "is not a continuation of the past. It opens a new chapter in Russian history—one that may well end in crisis."¹⁵ The return of Putin as Russian President is, indeed, not just the formal continuation of his two earlier presidencies. The thesis of this book is that it will be the start of a radicalization of his regime, comparable with the radicalization of Mussolini's regime in the second half of the 1930s, which, tellingly, came also about 12 years after the *Duce* had acquired absolute power. The comparison with the *Duce* is here not made by chance. Already earlier analysts have observed a resemblance of Putin's style and policies with that of the *Duce*. "Mr. Putin's regime in many ways is similar to Mussolini's Fascism," wrote, for instance, Zbigniew Brzezinski. "Il Duce made 'the trains run on time.' He centralized political power in the name of chauvinism. He imposed political controls over the economy without nationalizing it or destroying the economic oligarchs and their mafias. The Fascist regime evoked national greatness, discipline, and exalted myths of an alleged glorious past. Similarly, Mr. Putin is trying to blend the traditions of the Cheka (Lenin's Gestapo, where his own grandfather started his career), with Stalin's wartime leadership, with Russian Orthodoxy's claims to the status of the Third Rome, with Slavophile dreams of a single Slavic state ruled from the Kremlin."¹⁶ Brzezinski wrote these words in 2004 after five years of Putinism. They seem to be even more valid today.

“Weimar Russia”: The validity of a historical parallel

The aim of this book is to analyze the internal dynamic of Putinism. In order to explore this dynamic, the book starts with an analysis of the historical parallel between the Weimar Republic and post-Soviet Russia. Does such a “Weimar Parallel” exist? I have subdivided the “Weimar Parallel” into five clusters. These clusters are 1. geographical and demographic; 2. economic; 3. political; 4. societal, and 5. socio-psychological. Subsequently I have compared 23 different items in these clusters. The conclusion of this detailed analysis is that there exists, indeed, a more than striking resemblance between the situation in the Weimar Republic and the situation in post-Soviet Russia.

The next question was: if there exists such a clear analogy between the two historical situations, does this mean that Russia is moving toward the same *dénouement*: a fascist Russia? In order to answer this question I had to deal, first, with the question what, exactly, fascism is. In the literature there are many different definitions. I chose to compare two approaches: a “thick” and a “thin” approach. The “thick” approach is based on Max Weber’s ideal type, a heuristic device in which one accumulates as many characteristics of a phenomenon as possible and subsequently compares the existing reality with the ideal type. The “thin” method is its opposite: it intends to give a minimal definition of what fascism is. This last method was developed by Robert Griffin, who defined “the fascist minimum” as the presence of an ideology characterized by ultra-nationalism and ideas of national rebirth. However, I considered Griffin’s definition, based only on the presence of an ideology, too minimal. Because fascism is not only an ideology, it is also a practice. For this reason I proposed an adapted version of Griffin’s definition, adding an important element of interbellum fascism—its aggressive, militaristic, and expansionist character. The next step was to compare Putinism with these “thick” and “thin” definitions.

Putinism is not a fixed, but a dynamic category

A first observation I made was that “Putinism” (both as an ideology and as a system of governance) is not a fixed category. If one compares Putinism in 2000 with Putinism in 2012 one can observe important differences that indicate an immanent dynamic of the system. This dynamic is characterized by a movement away from an open and democratic society to an authoritarian state. Putin’s reign started with a brutal war in Chechnya that has led to accusations of genocide. Russia’s

multi-party democracy was changed into a strongly manipulated system in which the incumbents remain in power by massively falsifying the elections. United Russia, which began as a conservative party of former apparatchiks, developed in recent years three “party wings,” two of which preach an ultra-nationalist ideology and do not exclude a revision of international frontiers. In addition, the *Nashi*, a new youth movement, was set up by the leadership, with the aim to spread the Kremlin’s ultra-nationalist and neo-imperialist ideology. This movement was used as an instrument to intimidate and harass opponents. The war in Georgia in 2008 was an important watershed. It was the first time since the invasion in Afghanistan in 1979 that regular Russian troops invaded a sovereign foreign country. With the invasion of Georgia, Putin’s regime had crossed the Rubicon: it had invaded and dismembered a small neighboring country, which evoked reminiscences of what happened in the 1930s.

While in the year 2000 Putinism still could be given the benefit of the doubt, this was no longer the case in 2012. The growing ultra-nationalist fervor of the regime, coupled with an ideology of national rebirth, seemed to justify the use of Griffin’s definition of the “fascist minimum.” However, many questions remained about the precise character of Putin’s regime. Although this regime seemed to fulfill some minimal criteria of fascism, it seemed at the same time more moderate, not to say “more liberal,” than the fascist regimes of the interbellum. There were no paramilitary blackshirts, and although the opposition was repressed, it was not totally crushed. Elections were still held, and there even existed a few independent papers and radio stations. Putin’s Russia, in short, was and is not a totalitarian state.

Putin, Napoleon III, and Berlusconi

This brought me to compare Putin’s regime with two other regimes: that of Napoleon III in France and with a new form of modern populism, represented by the regime of Silvio Berlusconi in Italy. The similarities between Putin’s Russia and the regime of Napoleon III were striking. Like Putin’s regime, the regime of Napoleon III was characterized by an omnipresent secret police, the existence of a formal multi-party system with a weak and manipulated parliament, the objective to enlarge the national territory, and military adventures abroad. The regime of Napoleon III is generally considered a *proto-fascist* regime. However, Putin’s system was more modern than French Bonapartism. It also exhibited characteristics of modern *populist* regimes that have replaced physical repression of the

population by electoral manipulation and psychological brainwashing through the (controlled) mass media. This system has probably found its best expression in the regime of Italy's media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi. In a special chapter the friendship between Putin and Berlusconi is analyzed. This friendship was not only based on personal chemistry, but also on ideological conformity: both men share a neo-liberal and individualistic ideology, which preaches the message: "Enrich yourselves." This ideology is at odds with the collectivism of both communism and fascism. Therefore Putinism, which shares with "classical" fascism its ultra-nationalism and its ideas of national rebirth and imperialist revisionism, cannot be reduced to this classical form of fascism, nor to a modern version of Bonapartist proto-fascism in the style of Napoleon III. Putinism is rather a totally new, hybrid political system that combines elements of classical (interbellum) fascism with older, Bonapartist proto-fascism, and modern, twenty-first century populism. This hybrid system combines pre-modern and modern features. It combines internal repression with the adoption of the advanced globalized capitalist economy. It claims to be a modern democracy with a functioning multi-party system, but has in fact privatized the political sphere, establishing the power monopoly of a single political party in the service of a clan. It preaches "the dictatorship of the law," but puts itself above the law. It claims to respect international law, but breaches the elementary rules of international law by bullying its neighbors, invading a neighboring country, and dismembering it. It declares that its objective is to modernize the country, but two essential ingredients of a modern country, political freedom and the alternation of power, are absent.

Putinism: An unstable system of hybrid "fascism lite"?

This hybrid system of "fascism lite" which combines elements of proto-fascism, fascism, and post-fascism presents a softer face than Mussolinian fascism. However, it still contains a hard core of ultra-nationalism, militarism, and neo-imperialism. Therefore, one can expect that Putin, confronted with a growing internal opposition, will resort to increased repression at home and will conduct an anti-Western (read: anti-American) foreign policy abroad, eventually coupled with neo-imperialist adventures in Russia's Near Abroad. These neo-imperialist adventures are aimed to forge a broad consensus behind his leadership.

However, Putinism, as an authoritarian system, is bound to the personal fate of the leader and his clan. It is therefore highly unstable.

The big question is, therefore, how it will develop in the near future. The system of Napoleon III liberalized at the end of his reign. Berlusconi, although attacking the independence of the judiciary and undermining parliamentary democracy, was unable to destroy Italian democracy: in the end he was forced to quit. The systems of the interbellum, on the contrary, developed a deadly, totalitarian dynamic. What direction will Putin's Russia take? There are reasons for concern. The internal dynamic of the Putinist system in the first 12 years of Putin's reign was characterized by a continuing centralization of power and the elimination of potential competing power centers, bringing civil society more and more under the control of the government. After 12 years of Putinism there are clear signs of a "Putin fatigue" in Russian society. This will only strengthen the resolve of the regime and one may not exclude a scenario in which the "Weimar Parallel" will develop further. Much will depend on the strength of the democratic forces in Russia. But also the West has here a role to play by not letting its policies be guided by narrow commercial and financial interests or by the illusions of an ephemeral "reset." It should take vis-à-vis Putin's Russia a principled attitude by not condoning infringements on democratic procedures, it should not turn a blind eye on violations of human rights, and it should not resign to breaches of international law. This is also in the interest of the West itself. Because Putinism is not only a political system that denies the Russian citizens their fundamental democratic rights, nor is Putinism only a threat to Russia's immediate neighbors. Putinism is far more: it is a new right-wing radical *political model*, ready to be exported abroad. In the present economic and financial crisis, we can witness in the European Union the emergence and the worrying growth of populist and right radical political parties. Leaders of these parties are not only motivated by a deep-seated anti-Americanism and an aversion of liberal democracy: many of them consider Putin's Russia as a model to be followed. Marine Le Pen, leader of the French *Front National*, for instance, expressed in an interview in autumn 2011 with the Russian paper *Kommersant*, her admiration for Putin. "I admire Vladimir Putin," she said, adding: "we need to develop relations with Moscow and not with Washington."¹⁷ The Putinist model has already found an adept in Ukraine's President Yanukovych. Even governments of EU member states are tempted, as the example of the government of Viktor Orbán in Hungary makes clear. "Both Orbán and Yanukovych," one can read in a recent report of Freedom House, "have been accused of pursuing the 'Putinization' of their countries."¹⁸ The high expectations of 1991 were that Europe would function for Russia as an example and inspiring

beacon of democratic rule. Today these expectations have been turned upside down. In a European Union that is struggling to survive its most existential crisis since its foundation, the attractiveness of the European model is at a nadir and liberal democratic governance is increasingly challenged by populist, autocratic, and right-wing alternatives. Putinism, this new, hybrid mixture of pre- and postmodern authoritarianism is one of these alternatives. It casts its shadow over Europe in a similar way as Italian fascism did in the aftermath of the First World War.

Part I

“Weimar Russia”

The Validity of a Historical Parallel

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Russia and the Weimar Republic: Does a “Weimar Parallel” Exist?

Both Europeans and Americans increasingly assume that peace and calm are the natural order of things in Europe and that the first 45 years of this century, not the most recent, were the aberration. This is understandable since Europe has been free of war for so long that an ever-growing proportion of the Western public, born after World War II, has no direct experience with great-power war. However, this optimistic view is incorrect.¹

John J. Mearsheimer

Introduction: The danger of Praetorianism

In 1968 Samuel Huntington published his classic book *Political Order in Changing Societies* in which he warned that the outcome of sudden political changes in countries with ineffectual political institutions could be chaotic. A sudden increase in political participation, he wrote, instead of promoting democracy, could lead to a *praetorian system*. A praetorian system was, according to Huntington, a system in which “social forces confront each other nakedly; no political institutions, no corps of professional political leaders are recognized or accepted as the legitimate intermediaries to moderate group conflict. Equally important, no agreement exists among the groups as to the legitimate and authoritative methods for resolving conflicts (...) Each group employs means which reflect its peculiar nature and capabilities. The wealthy bribe; students riot; workers strike; mobs demonstrate; and the military coup.”² Huntington’s description of a praetorian system seemed rather adequate to describe the transition period in the Soviet

Union from 1988 to 1991—even before the abortive KGB-inspired coup against Gorbachev.

Huntington's analysis was later adapted by Jack Snyder in an article published in the spring of 1990 in *International Security* with the title "Averting Anarchy in the New Europe."³ In this article, Snyder pointed already to the possibility that the introduction of a market economy and a pluralist parliamentary democracy in—what then still was—the Soviet Union, would not, in itself, herald an epoch of international peace. On the contrary, it could be the beginning of an epoch of new, unknown conflicts. Snyder was concerned over what would happen in the Soviet Union, "which was undergoing a huge leap in mass political participation in the context of an authoritarian tradition and a demonstrable de-legitimation of its previous governing institutions. 'Traditional' elite groups, in this case the conservative sectors of the Party and the military, have corporatist interests that in the past have inclined them toward a conflictual approach to international politics."⁴ Snyder mentioned the Weimar Republic as a possible model for political developments in Soviet Russia: "In the 1920s, for example, Weimar Germany and Taisho Japan were societies on the cusp of emerging from praetorian patterns. Liberal, democratic, free-trading, non-militarist institutions were potentially emerging in these two states in the 1920s (...). When this relatively liberal international order collapsed with the Depression at the end of the 1920s, however, the liberal regimes in Germany and Japan collapsed along with it."⁵ Fifteen years later, Snyder's doubts about a possible negative evolution of post-Soviet Russia had all but disappeared. In a new book, *Electing to Fight—Why Emerging Democracies Go to War*, written with Edward Mansfield,⁶ the authors wrote: "The period of democratization by great powers has always been a moment of particular danger, in part because when states are militarily strong they may seek to use their force in pursuit of nationalist goals. Vladimir Putin, for example, calculated carefully in using the Second Chechen War to win election as president in Russia in 2000."⁷

From optimism to pessimism

Shortly after Snyder published his first article, the Soviet Union disintegrated. From that moment the possibility of the Weimar Parallel has been evoked on different occasions. Could the new, democratizing Russia develop into a new version of the Weimar Republic? That was the question. The answers varied according to the historical situation of the moment and the views of the different authors. Former U.S. President

Richard Nixon was after Snyder one of the first to warn against a Weimar scenario. In his book *Seize the Moment* (1992) he wrote: "Perilous historical analogies can be drawn to the tumultuous change sweeping the former Soviet Union. We could see a replay of the Bolshevik Revolution, with a fragile democratic order crushed by a reactionary coup. We could see a reprise of the fall of the Weimar Republic, with an economically wounded democratic government gradually eclipsed by ultranationalists promising renewed glory."⁸ Two years later, in 1994, a Weimar and Russia Forum was organized by the Institute of International Studies at the University of Berkeley. One of the speakers was Andrei Melville, Chair of the Department of Political Science at the Moscow State Institute for International Relations MGIMO. Melville saw some parallels between the new Russia and Weimar. He stressed "the extreme importance" of "the fact that in Weimar Germany and in post-Soviet, post-communist Russia, we are dealing with a *post-imperial* context. The Weimar Republic emerged out of the rubble of the Wilhelminian empire through the defeat and imposition of the humiliating Treaty of Versailles."⁹ Equally, in the Russian case, there was a country that "suffered from wounded national pride," a country "that faced domestically a serious revanchist opposition."¹⁰ But was this post-imperial trauma, that post-Soviet Russia shared with Weimar Germany, enough to conclude that there was a parallel between both situations? For Melville there was no reason for despair. On the contrary, he was more inclined to see "reasons for cautious optimism." One of these reasons was the emergence of a civil society. "The genie is out of the bottle," he said. And if someone would ask him: "Is the glass half-full or half-empty?" he would answer: "I believe it is half-full."¹¹

This same cautious optimism was still shared by Stephen Sestanovich, Director of Russian and Eurasian Studies at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. In an article in *Foreign Affairs*, which was published in the same year, he wrote: "New democracies in danger always call forth comparisons with the doomed Weimar Republic, and there is no denying that the analogy is useful for thinking about Russia's prospects."¹² He went on to suggest that the situation in Russia was even worse, because "Russians have to create what they call a 'rule of law' state," while "Germany in the 1920s was (...) a *Rechtsstaat*"¹³ But despite its many handicaps he thought that Russia could overcome its problems and concluded his article with a hopeful: "The struggle is far from over. Yet for all the country's troubles, the disorder of everyday life and the lack of constitutional traditions, it is getting easier to imagine Russian democracy's success."¹⁴ Three years later, in 1997, this same

cautious optimism could still be observed in another article in *Foreign Affairs*, written by David Remnick. In this article, with the title "Can Russia Change?," Remnick characterized Yeltsin's Russia as follows: "The rise of oligarchy summons up Argentina, *the power vacuum evokes Weimar Germany*, the dominance of the mafia hints at post-war Italy, and the presidential constitution recalls De Gaulle's France of 1958."¹⁵ Despite these qualifications, Remnick's overall assessment of the situation, like those of Melville and Sestanovich before him, remained globally positive. "But while Russia's problems alarm the world on occasion," he wrote, "none of these analogies takes into account the country's possibilities."¹⁶

However, one year later, in 1998, this relative optimism was no longer shared by Andreas Umland, who published a comprehensive study on "Weimar Russia." According to Umland, "Russia's fragile unconsolidated democratic regime is operating under political conditions which are in some regards indeed relatively similar or equivalent to those of Weimar Germany."¹⁷ Therefore, "'Weimar Russia' seems to be a not altogether inappropriate metaphor and conveys some insight into the condition of post-Soviet Russia."¹⁸ The relative optimism, expressed earlier by foreign Kremlin watchers, seemed to have made place for *doubt*. According to Umland, "to make a definite assessment—whether more optimistic or pessimistic—is difficult."

Seven years later, after Putin's first term as Russian President, the Weimar metaphor was used again, this time by the British historian Niall Ferguson. Ferguson sounded not only concerned, but outright alarmed. In an op-ed that appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* on January 1, 2005, with the title "Look back at Weimar—and start to worry about Russia,"¹⁹ he wrote that "the resemblance between Russia now and Germany in the 1930s seems especially apt." And he continued: "The Weimar parallel is not encouraging. Germany's descent into dictatorship went in stages: there were three more or less authoritarian chancellors before Hitler, each of whom sought to rule Germany by decree. The question that remains open is whether Putin is just a more successful version of one of these authoritarian warm-up acts, or a fully fledged Russian führer. Either way, he is fast becoming as big a threat to Western security as he is to Russian democracy."²⁰ Two years later, on May 28, 2007, Ferguson came back on the Weimar analogy in an op-ed that was published in the *Los Angeles Times*. He wrote that "the man who succeeded Boris N. Yeltsin (...) is doing much to vindicate our analysis."²¹ And he continued: "Yet this is not Cold War II. Unlike in the 1950s and 1960s, Russia is not self-confident but insecure. (...) It is a waning power. The value of the

parallel with Weimar Germany is precisely that it captures the dangers of a backlash against such weakness."²² Ferguson went on to warn that "Russia is now ready to play a more aggressive role on the international stage. Remember, it was Putin who restored the old Soviet national anthem. And it was he who described the collapse of the Soviet Union as a "national tragedy on an enormous scale." It would be a bigger tragedy if he or his successor tried to restore that evil empire. Unfortunately, that is precisely what the Weimar analogy predicts will happen."²³

Normally it is analysts critical of Putin's government who come forward with the Weimar Parallel. It was, therefore, surprising when in the summer of 2011 Sergey Markov, a prominent Duma member of Putin's own United Russia party was quoted in *Newsweek*, warning that "the situation [in Russia] is similar to that during the Weimar [Republic]: there is zero state ideology, deep social imbalance, and the general weakness of state institutions."²⁴ Adding: "Our regime is scared."²⁵ Markov, however, considers the *Weimarization* of Russia as an *external* threat to a government which does its utmost best to counter this dangerous trend. Other members of the Russian power elite, such as Valery Zorkin, head of the Russian Constitutional Court, expressed themselves in a similar way. Equally, Zorkin defended in April 2009 in a lecture in St. Petersburg the authoritarianism of the Russian government by referring to the Weimar Republic. "One of the most democratic republics in world history," he said, which "fell into chaos," as a result of which "one of the most cultivated peoples of Europe saw in Hitler their saviour."²⁶ Both Markov and Zorkin turned the argument on its head: Putin's authoritarian government, far from being an *expression* of the Weimar parallel, was presented as a means *to prevent* a Weimar situation. The *Newsweek* reporters—rightly—wrote in a comment: "Markov has been one of the Kremlin's leading ideologists for much of the last decade, so when an insider like him starts talking about Weimar—the shaky German democracy that preceded Hitler's rise in 1933—it's a worrisome sign. In fact, however, the growth of violent racism in Russia has been encouraged by the Kremlin's dabbling with nationalist ideology and politicized youth groups. And it's equally clear that the Kremlin, rather than seeking to eliminate the wave of ultranationalism, is doing its best to co-opt the movement."²⁷

The Weimar Parallel: The maturing process

The "Weimar Parallel" was a theory that first appeared when the Soviet Union was in a phase of political transformation during Gorbachev's

perestroika. It was subsequently evoked when Russia went through an economic “shock therapy” and when Yeltsin bombarded the Russian parliament. After this, it seemed temporarily to lose its relevance, to make a come-back around the turn of the century, and, more recently, during Putin’s and Medvedev’s presidencies. Interesting is the mainly *downward sloping optimism curve*. While around 1990 there prevailed feelings of *doubt* (Snyder), some years later, in the period 1994–1997, this doubt made place for a cautious *optimism* (Melville, Sestanovich, Remnick). But around 1998 this optimism disappeared and made again place for *doubt* (Umland), followed by outright *pessimism* in the “Putin years” 2005–2007 (Niall Ferguson).

Was Niall Ferguson right when he remarked that the Weimar Parallel was not obsolete, but had a greater relevance than ever? In answering this question we should not forget that the negative developments that led to Hitler’s accession to power did not take place at the *beginning* of the Weimar Republic—not even during the hyperinflation period of 1922–1923—but only between 1929 and 1933: 11 to 15 years after the republic was founded. The question, therefore, is if—as was the case in Weimar Germany—in Russia a maturing process can be observed, in which a stabilization took place under a non-democratic leadership after a period of chaos and internal political turmoil. Such an authoritarian stabilization can indeed be observed since December 1999 with the appointment of Vladimir Putin as Acting President by his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, and his subsequent election as President in March 2000. Putin used the second war in Chechnya to consolidate his reign. He abolished the elections for regional governors, attacked the independent media and disciplined the oligarchs. Having achieved this, he turned to foreign policy, and it is especially here that the Weimar parallel begins to look like a concrete possibility.

It is important to note that the Weimar Parallel is not a question of “to be or not to be,” it is not a question of “yes or no.” The Weimar Parallel is a question of evolution. What might not have been the case yesterday may yet be the case today. This idea was clearly expressed by Yegor Gaidar when he wrote: “Parallels are frequently drawn between Russia and the Weimar Republic. I am among those who did so in Russian political discussions in the early 1990s. But not everyone understands their import. Few remember that the imperial state regalia and symbols were restored in Germany eight years after the empire’s collapse, in 1926, and in Russia, after nine years, in 2000.”²⁸ Another author who pointed to the possibility of a Weimar evolution is Andreas Umland, who wrote: “‘Weimar Russia’ seems to be a not altogether

inappropriate metaphor and conveys some insight into the condition of post-Soviet Russia. One should keep in mind, however, that the Weimar Germany of the 1920s was much less “Weimarized” than the Weimar Germany of the early 1930s.”²⁹ A Russian author who makes the same point is Vyacheslav Likhachov, who in his book *Natsizm v Rossii* (Nazism in Russia) (2002), wrote: “Fortunately, the thesis of ‘Weimar Russia’ (in analogy of Weimar Germany) which was popular in the beginning of the 1990s, seemed not sustainable. A fascization of Russia on such a scale as was feared did not happen. When we describe today, retrospectively, the extreme right fringe of the political spectre in post-Soviet Russia, we understand that we are talking of a marginal phenomenon. *However, radical ideas have the capability to wait a long time for their hour to come. We can compare extremism with a cork that is popping off: it can be launched at any moment and as long as it has not been expelled, we don’t know if it will ever do so.*”³⁰ Likhachov wrote these words in 2002, at the beginning of Putin’s reign, when the character of his regime was not yet clear and many Western observers still gave him the benefit of the doubt. After ten years of growing internal repression and mounting aggressiveness against neighboring states, including the invasion of Georgia and its subsequent dismemberment, these doubts have vanished. There are signs that the cork of state-sponsored extremism has started to pop off.

The Weimar Parallel: Its five clusters

To what extent is it legitimate to compare the present situation in Russia with the situation in Germany under the Weimar Republic? Does one not run the risk of establishing historical parallels on the basis of some superficial similarities? How easily does one not yield to the temptation, after having established these similarities, to make snap judgments concerning future developments? Walter Laqueur, who is an eminent expert on the history of Weimar, wrote: “Some Western and Russian writers have stressed the similarities between Russia’s present situation and the last years of the Weimar Republic, with the rise of the Nazi movement. There are some striking ideological similarities (...) but there is also much that is totally different.”³¹ Laqueur, rightly, remarked, “historical parallels are of limited validity only.”³² We should take Laqueur’s warning to heart and proceed with extreme caution. This means that we only conclude that a Weimar parallel exists if there are enough elements that support this thesis. I think that there *are* enough elements and that there even are many more elements than most of

the aforementioned authors invoked. In fact, the number of similarities between the situation in Russia after 1991 and Germany after 1918 is striking. Without claiming that my list is comprehensive, I distinguish *five clusters* of mutually related elements. These five clusters are presented in Table 1.1.

The five dimensions in Table 1.1 are not always mutually exclusive. They may sometimes overlap or interfere. The loss of territories, for instance,

Table 1.1 The Weimar Parallel in five dimensions

Geographical and Demographic Aspects

- Loss of territories
- Non-contiguous territories
- National minorities abroad

Economic Aspects

- Inflation
- Economic crisis
- Agricultural crisis
- Simultaneity of problems

Political Aspects

- Introduction of mass politics
- Extremist parties in parliament
- Role of old elites
- Struggle for national symbols
- The installation of authoritarian rule

Societal Aspects

- Crime
- Political murders
- Baby booms and angry young men
- Omnipresent bribery and corruption
- An uncivil civil society: lacking trust and social capital

Socio-Psychological Aspects

- Feelings of humiliation
 - The “stab in the back” myth
 - Conspiracy theories
 - Blame game: the attribution of guilt
 - Post-imperial pain and the search for a new national myth
 - Xenophobia, racism, and ultra-nationalism
-

which in itself is a geographical fact, has simultaneous socio-psychological consequences because of the feelings of unease it causes in citizens whose country has diminished in size. In this chapter, we will discuss the first dimension: the geographical and demographic aspects. In the following chapters we will discuss the four remaining dimensions.

Geographical and demographic aspects

The cluster of geographical and demographic aspects includes the following:

- loss of territories
- division of the country in non-contiguous parts
- national minorities living abroad

Lost territories: The great amputation

Following World War I, Germany lost many territories that had for centuries been under German or Prussian control. These territories (especially in the East) were often considered by the Germans to be their *natural* historical soil.³³ According to Wolfgang Elz, “some 13 per cent of German territory, including economically important regions, was lost.”³⁴ Germany also lost its recently-acquired colonial empire in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. But it was especially the loss of national territory that was a shock for the inhabitants of the young Weimar Republic. A similar shock was experienced by the Russians after the demise of the Soviet Union in December 1991. The surface of the Soviet Union, which was more than 22 million square kilometers, shrank after the dissolution of the empire to 17,075,200 square kilometers.³⁵ This meant that the Soviet Union lost more than 24 percent of its surface, almost twice as much as the 13 percent that was lost by Germany after World War I. These figures, however, should be put in perspective. First, the Soviet Union was a multinational empire. Imperial Germany, on the contrary, despite its imperial claims, had more the character of a nation-state. Second, the territorial losses of Russia are dwarfed by those of Britain which after the decolonization of its empire had lost over 99 percent of its former surface.³⁶ Compared with the British situation the Russian territorial losses in 1991 were not so bad after all.

Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia: Two divided countries

Another parallel between Weimar Germany and Russia is the fact that the new country was *cut in two*. The territory of Weimar Germany

was *discontinuous*. The corridor to the Baltic Sea, which was given to Poland, cut the German mainland off from its provinces in East Prussia. Similarly, after the demise of the Soviet Union Russia was cut off from the Kaliningrad oblast, the region around the former East Prussian German town of Königsberg, which it had annexed after World War II. Kaliningrad had become an *exclave*.³⁷ At the beginning of the 1990s this was the occasion for all kinds of speculation. Some spoke of transforming Kaliningrad into a Russian Hong Kong³⁸ or making it into an independent (EU member) state. Pierre Béhar, a French geopolitician made all kinds of suggestions: the exclave could be used to settle Volga Germans from Russia; it could be divided up between Poland and Lithuania, or simply restored to the Baltics, because “this territory had been taken from them in the thirteenth century.”³⁹ However, none of these suggestions found an echo in Moscow. After many military-industrial plants had been closed, the economic situation of Kaliningrad only worsened. Due to a high incidence of AIDS, social problems, crime, ecological and environmental contamination, the exclave was on the way to becoming, as one author has put it, a black hole.⁴⁰ This black hole became more and more a nuisance for the neighboring countries, Poland and Lithuania, if not a direct threat after the Russian leadership began to use the enclave not so much as a potential economic growth generator, but as a geopolitical trump card in the form of a heavily-armed military bastion located in the heart of the EU. The threat of stationing short-range tactical nuclear Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad, made by President Medvedev on the day of Obama’s inauguration, was writing on the wall. Countries with divided territories can—but must not—develop strategies to reunite these territories. In such a case the divided territory functions as an instigator of revisionism. The “Polish corridor” (Gdansk) was used by Hitler as a pretext to invade Poland in 1939 and it is an irony of history that the Kaliningrad oblast is a part of the former East Prussia. The existence of the “corridor of Kaliningrad” could be one of the motives behind Putin’s efforts to incorporate Belarus into an ever closer union with Russia. In 2003 Putin even proposed a direct incorporation of Belarus in the Russian Federation as six *oblasts*, a proposal that was refused by Lukashenko, the President of Belarus.⁴¹ However, in the long run, efforts to connect Kaliningrad with Russia proper could become a threat to the Baltic countries.

National minorities: A ticking time bomb?

The third similarity in this category between post-Soviet Russia and the Weimar Republic is the problem of national minorities. After the

break-up of Germany, ten to 12 million Germans were living outside the borders of the Reich.⁴² If we take into account the fact that the population of Imperial Germany in 1913 was 67 million⁴³ and that the total (military and civilian) death toll of Germany in World War I was about 2.5 million,⁴⁴ we may assume that at the end of the war Germany had a population of approximately 64.5 million. This means that the percentage of the original population of Imperial Germany that became a national minority abroad after the war was about 15–18.5 percent.

According to the estimates of the 1989 census—before the break-up of the Soviet Union—approximately 25 percent of Russians lived at that time outside the RSFSR (the present Russian Federation). The largest communities were in the Ukraine (11.4 mil.), Kazakhstan (6.3 mil.), Uzbekistan (1.6 mil.) and Belarus (1.2 mil.). These figures do not include the “Russian-speakers,” people of other nationalities who use Russian as their first language. In percentages of the total population, Russian minorities were largest in Kazakhstan (37.8 percent), Latvia (34 percent) and Estonia (30.3 percent).⁴⁵ National minorities can become a geopolitical problem, but they need not. This is for four reasons. First, international organizations, such as the League of Nations and later the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE, set up charters to protect minority rights. Second, there is a tendency for migrants to return to the mother country which takes the pressure off the minority problem. Third, former members of majorities who become members of a minority can act proactively, making an effort to integrate into their new country and to adapt to the new situation. This can be done, for instance, by learning the language of the new homeland and by sending their children to local schools. Finally, we should differentiate between those who identify themselves as ethnic nationals of the former majority group, and the native speakers of the language of the former majority group. Russians, for instance, distinguish between ethnic Russians (*russkiye*) and Russophones. The Russophones, as a rule, exceed the group of ethnic Russians.

The government of a country that conducts a revisionist policy has a range of options. First, it can claim to be the only legitimate defender of the rights of the national minorities. In this case it will deny that this is the role of international organizations, or—if it is not openly denying this—it will maintain that these organizations do not fulfill their role in an appropriate way. Second, to strengthen its power base it will not differentiate between ethnic nationals and speakers of the national language. Third, it will actively support organizations of the national minorities in the other country. Fourth, it will reserve for itself a diplomatic *droit de*

regard, which means that it claims a right to interfere covertly or openly to influence the government and the government policies of the other country. Fifth, when this *droit de regard* is interpreted in an aggressive way it becomes a self-proclaimed *droit d'ingérence* which can go so far as to claim the right to intervene militarily "in order to protect the rights of the threatened minority." Sixth, the revisionist power can actively create excuses for such an armed intervention by promoting "incidents" in which the local organizations of minorities usually play an active role. Seventh, the revisionist power can go so far as to launch a military attack on the country in which it has a national minority in order "to protect" the minority. Eighth, it can change the international status of a part of the occupied country by recognizing it as an independent state. Ninth, it can finally annex the other country.

Nazi Germany went through most of the aforementioned stages before it finally occupied the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. If we compare Putin's and Medvedev's Russia, there are some striking similarities. On August 31, 2008 President Medvedev, in an interview in Sochi, developed the five principles of Russian foreign policy. The first of these five principles, later called the *Medvedev doctrine*,⁴⁶ was "the primacy of the fundamental principles of international law;" the fourth, "protecting the lives and dignity of our citizens, *wherever they may be*;" the fifth that "there are regions in which Russia has privileged interests."⁴⁷ "Protecting the lives of our citizens" was what Russia claimed to be doing by invading Georgia. In the period before the invasion, Georgian citizens living in South Ossetia and Abkhazia had been given Russian passports. Thereafter, these "Russians" were "protected." Medvedev wanted to reserve this "right to protect" not only for cases in which the *lives* of the real or imaginary Russian citizens were threatened, but also to protect their "dignity," a very flexible category that can easily be evoked in cases where one wants to create an incident. With its invasion of Georgia in August 2008, Russia completed all but the last of the aforementioned phases. The last phase: an outright annexation of Abkhazia or South Ossetia has not yet taken place.⁴⁸

A Russian approach in which real or pseudo "national minorities" increasingly become instrumentalized for expansive territorial ambitions in the post-Soviet space can also be observed elsewhere in the Russian "Near Abroad." The former President of Lithuania, Vytautas Landsbergis, said in an interview: "Let me give you an example of how Moscow works with the Russian minorities in the Baltic states. Using soft power it works to change people's attitudes and stir up negative sentiments. Those Russian inhabitants of the region find themselves

in a confrontational environment if, on instructions from Moscow, they do not feel loyal citizens of Estonia or Latvia. They begin to regard the existing international status as unfair, even perhaps unlawful, and consider from the legal standpoint that the territory where they live should belong to Russia—that one day they might indeed be ‘reunited’. This does affect people’s thinking and, consequently, they are turned into foreigners.”⁴⁹ The events in 2007, when the Kremlin sent its youth movement *Nashi* to Vilnius and mobilized the local Russian minority against the removal of the *Bronze Soldier* Soviet World War II Memorial, proved how true the words of Landsbergis were.

2

The “Weimar Parallel”: Economic, Political, and Societal Aspects

Three economic crises

The cluster of **economic** aspects contains the following elements:

- hyperinflation
- economic crisis
- agricultural crisis
- simultaneity of problems

As concerns the economic problems faced by the Weimar Republic and post-Soviet Russia, there are also many striking resemblances. In Weimar the loss of territories, the return of demobilized soldiers, the huge cost of war reparations: this all led to a chaotic situation for the new government of the young republic. The biggest problem the government had to handle was inflation. The “inflationary decade” did not start, however, in 1918, but in 1914 when the preceding, imperial government decided to finance its war efforts through loans instead of raising taxes. The growth of inflation was like a snowball, starting small and rolling slowly down a slope to become, eventually, an enormous, unstoppable avalanche. Its acceleration can be followed through the wholesale price index. If we put this index at 1 in 1913, it went respectively up to 4.15 in 1919, 14.86 in 1920 and 19.11 in 1921.¹ These inflation rates are already high: eight years later prices had increased *20-fold*. The Weimar government did achieve one initial success with its anti-inflationary policy: in the period 1918–1922, German industrial production recovered and there was almost no unemployment. Things changed, however, in 1922, when the wholesale price index first went up to 341.82, then in January 1923, when it reached a level of 2783, and finally, when it

made a huge jump to 1261 *thousand million* at the end of the same year. Money had become totally useless.² Inflation, however, is not like bad weather which affects everyone in the same way. It is, on the contrary, a zero-sum game with clear winners and losers. According to Arthur Rosenberg, "the profit-makers of inflation, the finance speculators, industrialists and the landlords had golden times. The German entrepreneurs could produce for ridiculously low cost, so German prices on the world market were lower than those of any competitor. That is why so much was produced in 1923 in Germany and the commodities dumped abroad."³ Dumping was necessary, because "in the early 1920s, there was a substantial 'hate discount,' in which fear and hatred of Germany (as well as discriminatory tariff legislation) excluded German products from the markets of former belligerents."⁴ The victims of the inflation were the German middle classes, pensioners, and wage earners. Savers lost their last penny. "It was," according to one author, "one of the biggest hold-ups of history."⁵ When, on November 15, 1923, the government finally pushed through monetary reforms, founding a new *Reichsmark* which was tied to the gold standard, the proletarianization of the German middle classes was already an established fact.

The hyperinflation of the years 1922–1923 was not the only problem the young Weimar Republic had to face. There was also the problem of a strongly reduced industrial output, which stood in 1919 at only 38 percent of the level reached in 1913 (however, part of this loss was due to loss of territory). Boosted by inflation in the following years industrial output began to rise: to 55 percent in 1920, 66 percent in 1921, 72 percent in 1922. Only in 1927, however, did it reach its pre-war level for the first time. But the crash of 1929 would bring a new downfall: in 1930 German industrial production fell to 91 percent of its 1913 level. It declined even more over the next two years.⁶ In the aftermath of the crash, unemployment rose to unprecedented levels.

What is more, there was still another, third economic crisis that hit the young Weimar Republic. This was an agricultural crisis. The large landowners to the east of the Elbe were its main victims. After the war they had lost their traditional export markets. At the same time they were confronted with cheap imports. The only solution was to modernize and rationalize, but debts used for investments could not be repaid and soon they ended up in a downward spiral. Even the *Osthilfe* (Eastern Aid), special subsidies paid by the government during the Weimar period, could not end the deadlock. The resulting pauperization did not remain restricted to farmers but soon spread among the rural population and inhabitants of small cities.⁷

Like Weimar Germany, post-Soviet Russia was also confronted with a multitude of economic crises. The chaos, created by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, led in the period 1992–1998 to a decline of GDP of 41.1 percent.⁸ In 1992 there was hyperinflation of 2,600 percent, in 1993 of over 800 percent, reminiscent of the German hyperinflation exactly 70 years earlier. In May 1995 inflation was still raging at over 200 percent a year.⁹ By the end of the 1990s, the disposable income of the average Russian citizen had declined 20 percent. After the financial meltdown of August 17, 1998, following the oil price collapse that hit Russian exports, poverty levels jumped to more than 40 percent of the population. As in Weimar, the general economic crisis in Russia was accompanied by an *agricultural crisis*. Traditionally, Russian agriculture was heavily subsidized by the state to keep consumer prices low, but it was inefficient. Before the October Revolution, from 1907 through 1913, Russia was the world's greatest grain exporter. However, in the ten final years of the Soviet Union it had become the world's greatest grain *importer*. In 1989 the yield of grain crops in the Russian Federation was almost one-third of the yield in Western Europe and the United States.¹⁰ A good indicator of the agricultural crisis that hit Russia in the 1990s is the development of Russia's poultry population. From the early 1970s huge poultry farms were built to provide the population with cheap meat. However, the problem with poultry is that it is fed with grain and grain had to be imported from Western countries and paid in hard currencies. The deepening of the economic crisis of the 1990s was, therefore, accompanied by a rather sudden and rapid decline of the poultry population in the Russian Federation. In 1971 the poultry population was 358 million; this almost doubled to 660 million in 1990. Then followed a downward trend: to 423 million in 1996 and 339 million in the year 2000. The poultry population, therefore, *halved* in the space of one decade.¹¹

The economic problems faced by post-Soviet Russia had much in common with the problems faced by the Weimar Republic. There was, however, one big difference: in Weimar there was *no fundamental break* with the economic system of Imperial Germany. Its capitalist structure remained intact and was even modernized in the 1920s when the first great industrial conglomerates, such as IG Farben (1925) and Vereinigte Stahlwerke (1926), were created. In Russia, on the other hand, there was a deep and fundamental break with the communist past. An unprecedented privatization process took place and socialist, state-led central planning was replaced by a Western-style market economy. All this created a chaotic and almost unmanageable situation in which

the economic and political system was permanently threatened by a total breakdown.

Simultaneity of problems

This brings us to the next similarity between Weimar and post-Soviet Russia: the simultaneity of problems.¹² Political leaders in both historical situations were like jugglers who tried to keep several balls in the air at the same time, but each time they seemed to succeed a new problem emerged, as if someone in the public threw in a new ball that they had to catch and keep in the air with the other balls. This required not only great flexibility in leadership and a capability to react quickly, but also nerves of steel and an intellectual understanding to handle an extremely complicated and historically unprecedented situation. An exit strategy was not obvious and had to be invented *ad hoc*. The accumulation of problems was *systemic*. It would be unfair to place all the blame on the Russian reformers, their lack of experience and their restricted know-how of the workings of a capitalist market economy. Even the most eminent Western economic experts, especially Milton Friedman's "Chicago Boys," who at that time assisted the Russian government, were entering uncharted waters, and, eventually, made huge mistakes when they insisted on imposing a harsh "shock therapy."

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The cluster of **political** aspects of the Weimar Parallel contains the following elements:

- praetorianism and the emergence of mass democracy
- extremist parties entering parliament
- the undermining role of old elites
- a struggle for national symbols
- implementation of authoritarian rule

Praetorianism and the emergence of mass democracy

Both Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia are characterized by the sudden introduction of mass politics. Certainly, in Imperial Germany there already existed a working parliament, with parliamentary elections and established political parties, including a social-democratic opposition party, but a political alternation could not take place because the

government was appointed by the Kaiser. This changed after November 1918. For the first time the socialists entered government and Germany got a real parliamentary system in which the people became the ultimate source of political power. Much more than in Imperial Germany, in which politics was still largely a *Honoratiorenpolitik*—an honorable occupation for the leisured classes—politics became an affair of the people and a new kind of politician appeared: the *professional politician*. This new type of politician was described in 1919 by the sociologist Max Weber in his essay “Politics as a Profession.”¹³ In another essay, published one year earlier, Weber, with remarkable acumen, had already analyzed the workings of the newly emerging mass democracy. “Democratization and demagoguery go together,” he wrote.¹⁴ “A political leader (...) wins the trust and the belief of the masses (...) by means of mass demagoguery.”¹⁵ And he warned, “the political *danger* of mass democracy lies in the first place in the possibility of a strong preponderance of *emotional* elements in politics.”¹⁶ And Weber continued: “not the political passive ‘mass’ generates the leader, but the political leader seeks followers and wins the mass by demagoguery.”¹⁷ (Because Weber used the word *Führer* in the German text, the last phrase gets a clairvoyant undertone). Max Weber warned equally about attempted coups and “the democracy of the street,” “which is most powerful in countries with a powerless or with a politically discredited parliament.”¹⁸ The dangers inherent in the sudden emergence of a modern mass democracy in a non-stable environment, so brilliantly analyzed by Weber at the very moment it arrived, would later find a place in political science under the heading of praetorian politics, a concept coined by Samuel Huntington and further elaborated by Jack Snyder.

Extremist political parties

Huntington’s concept of “praetorianism” refers to a situation of a sudden democratic “breakthrough”: the introduction of mass politics when an established institutional framework does not yet exist and—what is, maybe, even more important—when the population has not yet interiorized and assumed the new democratic values and democratic procedures. Dissenting views are not tolerated and the patience and “give and take” attitude, necessary for consensus building, are lacking. This praetorianism finds its expression in the existence of extremist political parties. In Weimar these extremist parties were the Communist Party (KPD) on the left and the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei*, (the German National People’s Party DNVP) and Hitler’s NSDAP on the right. The last

two parties worked together in the so-called *Harzburger Front*. While the German Communist Party remained quite constant between May 1924 and March 1933 and never got more than 16.8 percent of the vote,¹⁹ the two extreme right parties increased their share of the vote in the same period from 26 percent to 51.9 percent.²⁰ This meant that the moderate, democratic parties which had formed the "Weimar Coalition" (SPD, Catholic Centre Party and the German Democratic Party) gradually lost ground and could no longer govern, undermined by a groundswell of the extreme right.²¹

In post-Soviet Russia, like in Weimar, we can also observe an important presence of extremist parties in the parliament. In the Russian Supreme Soviet which was dissolved by Yeltsin on September 21, 1993 there existed a red-brown alliance of the communists and the fascist Liberal Democratic Party of Zhirinovskiy. Aleksandr Rutskoy, Yeltsin's communist leaning Vice-President, defended the parliament building against Yeltsin's troops with the help of the militia of Aleksandr Barkashov's fascist organization "Russian National Unity." The program of this organization had many similarities with the program of the NSDAP, demanding "the removal from Russia of all Jews and gypsies."²² As concerning the Communist Party (CPRF), many observers agree that "the ideology dominant within what still goes under the name of communist movement is no longer communist, but fascist." The most unequivocal of these observers go so far as to claim that "the CPRF is in effect a fascist party, both at the top and at the provincial grassroots." Or that "the CPRF has for a long time been following the ideas not of communism and socialism, but of national-socialism."²³ Dmitry Furman, an analyst of the Gorbachev Foundation, wrote: "In the ideology of our largest party, the CPFR, fascistoid features are so salient that one has to be blind and deaf not to notice them."²⁴ Zyuganov's Communist Party, which claimed higher pensions or a more equal distribution of incomes, apparently still had a socialist agenda, but this socialism had lost its internationalist connotations to become purely national and nationalist. The few remaining socialist ideas were submerged in an all-embracing ultra-nationalism which stressed the virtues of patriotism and the urgent need to restore Russia's great power status. The difference between Zhirinovskiy's LDPR and Zyuganov's CPRF has, therefore, become marginal and cannot be compared with the difference between the extreme right and extreme left in the Weimar Republic. In the 1920s communism was still a real alternative. This is no longer the case in post-Soviet Russia. Despite its name, the CPRF does not want to return to Russia's communist past. The party defends in fact the same

ultranationalist values as Zhirinovsky's LDPR—but has a different clientele, consisting mainly of former apparatchiks and pensioners.

There exists, however, one big difference between post-Soviet Russia and Weimar: over the last 15 years the electoral results of the two extremist parties were not improving, but diminishing. In the parliamentary elections, the votes for both parties, taken together, dropped from 35.32 percent in 1993 to 19.71 percent in 2007.²⁵ Does this mean that—unlike in Weimar, where extremism was growing over the years—the extremist danger in post-Soviet Russia is diminishing? One would wish so. Unfortunately, such an optimistic conclusion seems premature, because there is still another problem: Otto Kirchheimer has pointed to a specific characteristic of the Weimar party system. Between the political parties of Weimar there was, according to him, “lame and only sporadically articulated competition. The competitors were more interested in taking over parts of dissolving parties than to be concerned about the goodwill of their actual, more or less loyal, voters. This competition within the system, however, did not lead to clearly demarcated positions of a majority against a minority, of the government against the loyal opposition.”²⁶ A similar lack of clear demarcation lines as Kirchheimer observed between the parties of Weimar can be observed in post-Soviet Russia. Most political parties cannot be considered as different political platforms with ideologically different proposals for the organization of the state and society. On the contrary, they function as huge vacuum cleaners, party machines set up to suck in the maximum number of votes.

In post-Soviet Russia, party creation and party formation has become the work of political specialists. It even has obtained the status of a pseudo science, called *polittekhlogiya*. This *political technology* is in its essence the manipulation of quasi-democratic processes. It is being practiced with much skill by the ruling elite in the Kremlin, especially by Vladislav Surkov, the deputy head of the Presidential Administration, who is the inventor of the concept “sovereign democracy” which, in an earlier phase, was more rightly called “managed democracy.” Other well-known “political technologists” are Gleb Pavlovsky, a leading Kremlin adviser, and Sergey Markov, Director of the Moscow Institute for Political Studies and an adviser to Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. “Political technology” was invented during Gorbachev's perestroika. Aleksandr Yakovlev, “the Father of Perestroika” and a former Politburo member, wrote in his memoirs that Zhirinovsky's LDPR was invented in 1989 by the CPSU and the KGB. Even the name of the party would be a KGB invention, taken from a suggestion made by KGB General Filip Bobkov. Yakovlev's memoirs have been confirmed by the former

mayor of Saint Petersburg, Anatoly Sobchak.²⁷ Since the foundation of Zhirinovsky's Liberal-Democratic Party (what is in a name?), this Kremlin-inspired method of party formation has become the rule. "Unity" (Yedinstvo) in 1999, "United Russia" (Yedinaya Rossiya) in 2001, "A Just Russia" (Spravedlivaya Rossiya) in 2006: all these parties were created on the direct initiative of the Kremlin or of circles close to it. "A Just Russia" was invented in order to function as a "left leaning" competitor to the communist party (the CPRF was still considered too independent and should, therefore, be curtailed).

All this leads to a new question. In Weimar, the moderate parties in the political center were genuine democratic and moderate political parties. They were not created by the authorities to give the impression of being democratic and moderate. In Russia things are different. United Russia was expressly created as a great, unified "center party" which would occupy the space between the "extreme right" and the "extreme left" in the State Duma. But can one really speak of a "center" position when Zhirinovsky's "liberal-democrats" and Zyuganov's "communists" are *de facto* of the same—right extremist—kind and the real liberal-democrats of Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces (SPS) are no longer represented in parliament? And where is this "center" when the difference between United Russia and the other parties is not so much a question of ideology as a question of a somewhat more moderate and diplomatic tone? The problem of today's Russia is that ultranationalist, neo-imperialist, and authoritarian views are broadly shared by *all* parties represented in the State Duma and that there is no competition between the different electoral platforms.

The only remaining competition is a competition for votes, because votes provide well-paid seats in representative bodies, and, if they do not provide real power, then in any case they bring attractive privileges and political influence that has economic value. (This might be the main reason why the reaction of both the CPRF and the LDPR was so vehement after the stolen local elections of 2009). In practice, none of the four parties represented in parliament, plays an opposition role. All loyally support Putin's government—and one can hardly observe a difference between the present "multi-party" system and the former Soviet one-party system. The Weimar government, in the period of hyperinflation in 1923–1924 and in its last years, used Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution to rule directly by emergency decrees, thereby emasculating the parliament. In Russia, the government does not need exceptional powers in order to emasculate parliament, because the parliament has already emasculated itself.

The undermining role of old elites in Weimar and post-Soviet Russia

Another important similarity between Weimar and post-Soviet Russia is the undermining role played by the old elites in the new, democratic system. In both situations these old elites had their roots and allegiances in the preceding *pre-democratic* systems: in Imperial Wilhelmian Germany on the one hand, and in the communist Soviet Union on the other hand. In Weimar Germany, these elites had never really accepted, and even less internalized, the new democratic system. They had resigned themselves *à contrecœur* to the new Republic and—driven by a deeply felt nostalgia for the *ancien régime*—secretly and openly sabotaged the new political order. These old elites could be found in the agrarian *Junker* landlord class, in the army (General Ludendorff, for instance, was Hitler's ally in the aborted Munich Beer Hall Putsch of November 1922), and also in leading business circles (Alfred Hugenberg, a press magnate, was chairman of the reactionary DNVP). When in 1925 these groups succeeded in getting the conservative, 77 year-old Field Marshall Paul von Hindenburg elected to *Reichspresident*, the gradual demolition of the democratic Weimar Republic could begin. In January 1933 this process ultimately led to Hitler's appointment as chancellor by Hindenburg.

In post-Soviet Russia the old elites also played a crucial role in the demolition of the emerging democratic structures of the newly-formed Russian Federation. The old elites in Russia resembled those in Weimar in their nostalgia for the old regime and its imperial greatness. They also resembled their Weimar counterparts in their allegiance to a *pre-democratic*, authoritarian system and their rejection of the emerging pluralist Western-style democracy. There was, however, one important difference. In Russia there was no industrial and financial capitalist class, nor a class of landlords, as was the case in Weimar. This capitalist class only *emerged* during the process of privatization which was a part of the democratic revolution. Former factory managers and communist government officials jumped on the bandwagon and bought state assets for extremely low prices with government loans. This new capitalist class, which was a clear winner in the new situation, supported the reforms. The nostalgic old elite in Russia consisted, therefore, particularly of the *losers* of the democratic revolution and of the end of empire: the army (demoralized, returning to Russia after leaving their bases abroad), the military-industrial complex (where thousands of jobs were lost), the state bureaucracy (those who did not profit from privatization), and—last but not least—the KGB.

The KGB would take the lead in the revolt of the nostalgic old elites. And it is Boris Yeltsin's great historical responsibility to have let this happen. After the KGB-inspired putsch of August 1991 the most obvious step would have been to dissolve the KGB, as, for instance, the Czech government had done with its secret service in 1990. Yeltsin, instead, chose a strategy of divide and rule. He thought that he could manage to keep the organization in check by splitting it into several services and by placing the Ministry of Security, responsible for the secret service, under the control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.²⁸ This reorganization did not break the power of the "Chekists," as the agents—proudly—still called themselves, referring to the Cheka, the first Soviet secret police, set up by Felix Dzerzhinsky in December 1917. On the contrary, in his armed confrontation with the parliament in October 1993 Yeltsin urgently needed their support and after this event they only gained more influence. In 1994—only a few months after the siege of the parliament—Michael Waller wrote:

The chekists emerged from the Soviet collapse with a great advantage over ordinary citizens and even much of the nomenklatura. They had banks of information at their disposal and connections throughout the former USSR and around the world. They knew better than the rest of their countrymen how to operate in a Western political and business environment. And, even though they were governed ostensibly by new legislation, they are the law. Like a cluster bomb which spews large numbers of tiny bomblets, the KGB, when broken into smaller parts, penetrates all aspects of life. Whereas under the communist party the organs were strictly controlled from the top down, those controls seem to have evaporated. The chekists have taken on a life of their own, unaccountable to anyone, yet relatively unified as a closed fraternity.²⁹

It was exactly this last point which was totally neglected by Yeltsin: that the KGB was a closed fraternity, almost comparable with the Teutonic Knights, the religious crusading military order that once reigned in the Baltic region. The bonds between the chekists were much deeper than the bonds between military officers and these bonds could not easily be severed, not even by splitting the organization. The chekists combined the reciprocal loyalty and mutual trust of members of a secret fraternity with a Leninist *avant garde* ethos. They considered themselves to be the members of an elite corps to whom the fate of the fatherland had been entrusted.

The struggle for political symbols: The flag and the anthem

The preservation of the old elites in the new regime led not only to a struggle for power, but also to a struggle over symbols. This can be observed in both the Weimar Republic and post-Soviet Russia. In Weimar it centered around the national flag, in Russia around the national anthem. The founding fathers of the Weimar Republic wanted to stress the break with Imperial Germany, so they introduced in Article 3 of the Weimar Constitution a new flag with the colors black-red-gold, the colors of the national-democratic revolution of 1848. These colors were chosen because in the revolution of 1848 German nationalism was still an expression of liberal-democratic ideals, unlike the conservative nationalism embodied by Bismarck and the German Empire. However, this change of the national flag by the Weimar government was not consequent, because the same article 3 of the Constitution stated that the trade flag on ships would remain the imperial black-white-red flag with the new Weimar colors added in the upper inner corner. This led to a deeply emotional *Flaggenstreit* (flag struggle). The national conservatives refused to use the new flag and claimed the reintroduction of the old imperial flag. The struggle went on unresolved for years. Its importance became clear in 1933, after Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor. In the general euphoria, wrote Ernst Nolte, "even in the smallest village the swastika flags flew next to the black-white-red of the old *Reich*."³⁰ The *Flaggenstreit* was finally resolved on September 15, 1935, when Hitler's Flag Law introduced a new German national flag: the Nazi swastika flag.

In Weimar, however, there was no conflict over the other national symbol: the new national anthem, the *Deutschlandlied*, introduced in 1922. This anthem, based on a melody composed by Joseph Haydn in 1797 and with a text written in 1841 by Hoffmann von Fallersleben, was easily accepted by the whole population across the left-right divide. In Russia the situation was just the opposite of Weimar Germany. Here the new flag: the tsarist tricolor of white, blue and red, which replaced the old Soviet flag, was accepted without any problems. Its broad acceptance was probably due to the fact that the old Soviet flag was considered to be a communist flag rather than a Russian one. Contrary to Weimar Germany in Russia the struggle for symbols centered around the national anthem. In 1990, when Russia was still a federal republic of the Soviet Union, it had no national anthem. In order to distance his republic from the Soviet Union, the newly elected Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, chose as the Russian national anthem the "Patriotic Song" (*Patrioticheskaya Pesnya*),

of Mikhail Glinka, a nineteenth-century composer, who had written it for a national anthem contest in 1833. This was only a tune, and had no lyrics. In 1993, after the demise of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin made "The Patriotic Song" the official anthem of the new Russian Federation.

This decision was much criticized, not only by the old guard. Even athletes, participating in the 2000 Olympic Games, complained that they had a national anthem without words and that, unlike the other delegations, they had to remain silent. The emerging nostalgia for the old Soviet Union expressed itself in a longing for the old melody of Aleksandr Aleksandrov, which was chosen by Stalin in 1944 to replace "The International" as the Soviet national anthem. Despite protests from the democratic opposition that a restoration of Stalin's Soviet anthem would give the wrong signal, one of the first measures taken by Putin after becoming president was a decision in 2000 to officially reintroduce the old Soviet hymn. Only the text was changed after a nation-wide lyrics contest which was won by Sergey Mikhalkov. The octogenarian Sergey Mikhalkov was the author of the original text of 1944. He was not only known in Russia as the writer of children's books, but also as a former Chairman of the Soviet Writers' Union. As such he worked for the KGB and participated actively in smear campaigns against Boris Pasternak and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. His original text glorified Stalin, but was removed after Stalin's death when Khrushchev started the destalinization process. From that time on, the Russian national anthem had no lyrics. This situation ended in 1977, when Mikhalkov was invited to write new lyrics for the sixtieth anniversary of the October Revolution. This new text, glorifying Lenin and communism (but not Stalin) survived until the demise of the Soviet Union.

Unfortunately, the fear expressed by critics that Putin's initiative to restore the old Soviet anthem was the beginning of a silent rehabilitation of Russia's Stalinist past, has become true. In 2007 Putin appointed a commission of history teachers to write a new history textbook for secondary schools in which the role of Stalin was presented in a more positive way. Since September 2008, hundreds of thousands Russian schoolchildren used these books. One could read in these books, products of the publishing house "Enlightenment" (again: what's in a name?), that "the Soviet Union was not a democracy, but it was an example for millions of people around the world of the best and fairest society."³¹ The authors explain that over the last 70 years the Soviet Union was "a gigantic superpower which managed a social revolution and won the most cruel of wars." The textbook covers the period 1945–2006: from Stalin's victory in the Great Patriotic War to

Putin's victory and his restoration of Russian greatness. The demise of the communist Soviet Union in 1991 is considered to be neither a historical turning point, nor a new beginning, but rather a historical nadir between the two positive reference dates: 1945 and 2006. Stalin's repression is not denied, but justified as a historical necessity. It is no surprise that the textbook's bad guy is Gorbachev who lost Stalin's hard won empire. Putin's initiatives have gained a broad popular support. Seventy-seven percent of the Russian population approved the restoration of the Soviet national anthem.³² According to the Levada Center, an independent Russian pollster, Stalin's popularity has tripled over the last 20 years. A museum dedicated to Stalin has opened in Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad), and in a nation-wide popularity contest, organized by the state television channel Rossiya in 2008, Stalin was mentioned by the public as the third greatest figure in Russian history.

An example of the Kremlin-led Stalin revival is the return to the metro station Kurskaya—one of the busiest in Moscow—of a fragment of Mikhalkov's Stalin-era Soviet anthem which reads: "Nas vyrastil Stalin na vernost narodu. Na trud i na podvigi nas vdokhnovil" ("Stalin brought us up to be loyal to the people. He inspired us to labor and great deeds."). These phrases were removed in the 1950s during Khrushchev's destalinization. The liberal Yabloko party called on President Medvedev to remove the text, calling them a "violation of the memory of the millions of victims from Stalinism."³³ The head of the human rights organization Memorial, Oleg Orlov, said that "recreating the original station with Stalin's name is the same as restoring a Nazi memorial with Hitler's name on a swastika."³⁴ The fight for national symbols, which in Weimar took the form of a struggle around the national flag, was ultimately won by the Nazis. In Russia the fight for national symbols is now taking place around the national anthem. The events in the Kurskaya metro station show that, after restoring the tune of the Soviet anthem, the Russian leadership is now considering restoring the lyrics. It seems not to be the end of the Stalinist revival.

The installation of authoritarian rule

Another resemblance between the Weimar Republic and post-Soviet Russia is a tendency in both countries to implement authoritarian rule. Weimar Germany did not suddenly become authoritarian in 1933 with the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor. Strong authoritarian tendencies existed already before Hitler came to power. Since the spring

of 1930 Heinrich Brüning's minority government had ruled with an iron fist, supported by President Hindenburg, who, using Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, made it possible to govern by "emergency measures." This was rule by decree that did not need the prior consent of parliament. Sebastian Haffner wrote: "In the spring of 1930 Brüning became Reich Chancellor and for the first time since we could think of, Germany had a severe ruler."³⁵ And he continued: "Much of what later would be a part of Hitler's most effective torture instruments was introduced by Brüning (...) even the restriction of the freedom of the press and the gagging of parliament go, initially, back to him. (...) So far I know, the Brüning regime is the first study and, so to say, the model for a kind of government that since then has been copied in many countries of Europe: the semi-dictatorship in name of democracy and as a defense against real dictatorship."³⁶ This authoritarian rule continued in 1932 under Brüning's successors, Chancellor Franz von Papen and Chancellor Kurt von Schleicher. It would definitively undermine any trust in parliamentary democracy and prepare the country for the Nazi dictatorship.

In post-Soviet Russia authoritarianism did not start with Putin. It was Yeltsin who let tanks shell the building of the Supreme Soviet, who introduced a new constitution that implemented a strong presidency, and who on December 31, 1999, appointed Putin acting president, playing as such a *tour de force* on the Russian electorate. But there is an important difference between Yeltsin and Putin. Yeltsin used authoritarian methods as a short term tactic to remain in power. Yeltsin could at times jeopardize the civil liberties of the Russian citizens, but he did not willingly destroy them. Putin, on the other hand, made the attack on civil liberties a deliberate, long-term strategy and strengthened these authoritarian tendencies during his rule.

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The cluster of **societal** aspects of the Weimar Parallel contains the following elements:

- the proliferation of crime and political murder
- overcrowded prisons
- baby booms and "angry young men"
- bribery and corruption
- the development of an "uncivil society", lacking trust and social capital

The proliferation of crime and political murder

Another parallel between Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia is the proliferation of crime. During the Cold War people in the West thought that in the Soviet Union crime levels were low due to the fact that in a totalitarian state the daily lives of the citizens were subject to permanent control and scrutiny by the authorities. Crime—in other words: “normal” crime, and not “official” crime on the highest state levels—was considered to be much less developed than in the West. This received idea proved to be totally false. Mancur Olson described the huge surprise of Western observers after 1989. “The lifting of the iron curtain,” he wrote, “revealed something else that the developed nations of the West, whether they had been winners or losers in World War II, did not expect to see: an extraordinary amount of official corruption and Mafia-style crime. In Russia, for example, some polls indicate that crime and corruption are considered the most significant problem of society.”³⁷ People in the West had to review their vision. The Soviet Union had not been such a quiet place after all (“quiet place” here, of course, only refers to the presumed absence of organized crime in civil society, and not to the absence of state-organized terror and repression).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the situation became even worse and crime rates rose steeply. The Russian Federation has acquired a reputation of being one of the most lawless countries in the world. Criminality is not confined to powerful local and international mafias and business tycoons, but can also be found in corrupt state officials, Duma members, regional governors, local authorities, judges, prosecutors, the police, and the army. All levels of the state apparatus are undermined by a pestilence of corruption, fraud and money laundering. Putin himself has been accused of contacts with the mafia during the time that he was vice-mayor of Saint Petersburg.³⁸ The most disconcerting and ugly feature of this criminality, however, has become the proliferation of murder and manslaughter in Russia. According to Peter Juviler, “crime has risen considerably since the late 1980s. Officially reported murders and attempted murders in Russia more than doubled between 1991 and 1995, dipped for 3 years, then rose again in 1998.”³⁹ Boris Reitschuster gave the following figures: “in 1990 in Russia about 16,000 people were killed in a violent way; in the year 2001 it was already 33,000—almost 13 times more than in Germany.”⁴⁰ Cynically spoken, murder has become part of the “normal way of life” in post-Soviet Russia.⁴¹

Apart from the high number of “ordinary” murders, the wave of *political* murders that sweeps the country is even more troubling. Here too

we have an important parallel with Weimar Germany. Present-day Germany has a very orderly and even "quiet" image. Crime, of course, exists, and so does organized crime, and international gangs do operate in the territory of the Federal Republic, but German crime rates are at an average EU level and are much lower than in Russia. This was not always the case. In the Weimar Republic an explosion of crime and violence took place. This brutalization was a direct consequence of the First World War. "In much of Europe crime and political militancy increased directly after the war," wrote George L. Mosse. "To many all over Europe it seemed as if the First World War had never ended but was being continued during the interwar years. The vocabulary of the political battle, the desire to utterly destroy the political enemy, and the way in which the adversaries were pictured, all seemed to continue the First World War mostly against a set of different, internal foes. The growing indifference toward mass death was a sign of this process of brutalization, though it is not easy to prove."⁴² And he added: "The political Right considered itself to be the inheritor of the war experience, not just in Germany but throughout Europe, and the process of brutalization was closely linked to the spread of the Right's influence among the population."⁴³

In 1931 the German writer Siegfried Kracauer wrote: "Murders in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany are on the increase. I am not thinking just of political murders—those street shootings and meeting-hall slaughters reported without interruption in the daily press. A striking number of bloody crimes are being committed by persons other than the National Socialists and the communists. Life has recently become cheap."⁴⁴ According to Kracauer, "the exceptional degree of this insecurity is what characterizes the overwhelming process of social transformation that has been our lot since the end of the world war."⁴⁵ For the wave of political murders to which Kracauer already referred, Emil Julius Gumbel stated in his report "Four Years of Political Murder" (1922) for the period 1918–1922 that there were 354 political murders of which 332 were committed by the right and 22 by the left.⁴⁶ A political murder was defined by him as "a premeditated, illegal killing of a well-known German by another German for domestic political motives," where the action is 'an individual deed' (no lynching).⁴⁷ According to Gumbel, "All of the leaders of the left who openly opposed the war and whom the workers trusted—Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Eisner, (Gustav) Landauer, (Leo) Jogiches, et al.—are dead. In recent times (...) they are also proceeding to murder the leaders of the moderate parties. That this method has become so widespread in

the military (all of the murders by the right have been committed by officers or soldiers) naturally lies in the psychological brutalization of the war, in which the life of the individual was no longer allowed to count. In this regard the frequently spoken and unspoken order not to take prisoners has had an especially significant influence."⁴⁸ And he continued: "The unbelievable leniency of the court is also quite well known to the perpetrators. Thus are the political murders of today in Germany to be distinguished from those common previously in other countries by two aspects: *their great number and the fact that they go unpunished.* (...) *Today the perpetrator risks nothing at all.* Powerful organizations with an extensive network of confidantes over the whole country provide him with shelter, protection, and material sustenance. 'Right minded' bureaucrats and police chiefs supply falsified papers for potentially necessary trips abroad. (...) The beneficiaries live magnificently and happily in the best hotels. In short, political murder has gone from being a heroic deed, to becoming a daily act, an easy source of earnings for 'impulsive customers.' These conditions would naturally be inconceivable without the perhaps unconscious assistance of the courts."⁴⁹ When one reads these lines, one has the impression of reading a report on the situation in present-day Russia. Steve LeVine, who worked in Chechnya as a reporter for the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek*, wrote, for instance, in almost similar words: "In Putin's Russia the state cannot be counted on to protect the lives of its citizens. At worst, hired killers and those who employ them have a reason to believe that they can carry out executions without fear of the law."⁵⁰

This situation of impunity exists, of course, only in Russian territory. Murderers, who are sent abroad, have to take into account that if they are captured in a foreign country, they will risk heavy penalties. In the case of Weimar Germany this fact is emphasized by Gumbel who wrote: "One cannot murder a political opponent who lives abroad, but not, for example, because it would be technically impossible (that is not the case) but because one would run the risk of being punished there."⁵¹ This can almost be read as a recipe for the murder of the former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko in London in November 2006. In order to leave no trace of the murder and to return unpunished to Russia, the killer(s) used the radio-active isotope polonium-210. The Russian government refused to extradite the main suspect, Andrey Lugovoy, who was offered a Duma seat by Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party in order to gain legal immunity. In 2009 Lugovoy was even briefly a mayoral candidate in the Olympic ski-resort of Sochi.

Overcrowded prisons

The situation of generalized insecurity in both Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia is also reflected in the number of prisoners and the situation in the prisons. According to Nicolaus Wachsmann, "Weimar was always obsessed with crime."⁵² This was in part "a reflection of real changes in criminality. In the months following the armistice soldiers returning from the front committed many armed robberies and thefts. Violent crimes increased sharply."⁵³ In fact, "Weimar was hit by a crime wave. In the early 1920s, inflation increasingly rendered the German currency worthless, driving vast numbers of people to property crime. Recorded thefts reached new heights, and the total number of people convicted of criminal offences more than doubled, increasing from 348,247 in 1919 to 823,902 in 1923, at the climax of the catastrophic hyper-inflation."⁵⁴ This crime wave "led to a rapid increase in prisoners. During the war, prisoner numbers had remained rather low and postwar amnesties reduced them still further. But this quickly changed, and by 1920 penal institutions all over Germany were reporting a serious lack of space."⁵⁵ How does this situation compare with the situation in post-Soviet Russia? Peter Juwiler gave the following account:

Russia has the world's highest rate of incarceration: 740 per 100,000 in the mid-1990s. Compare this with 60 per 100,000 in tsarist Russia. Was this because it was an agrarian country in that era? Well then, compare it with the present incarceration rate of about 72 per 100,000 in predominantly urban England and Wales. (...) Russia's jails seem particularly hellish. Some ten to twenty thousand inmates die each year as a result of beatings, overcrowding, malnutrition, and lack of sanitation or adequate medical care. Preliminary detention jails (SIZOs) hold over 270,000 inmates out of a total prison population of more than a million. The SIZOs are so overcrowded that prisoners must sleep in three shifts (a match will not strike in some of the unventilated cells). Outside their cells, inmates face the possibility of a variety of police torture to extract confessions, true or not.⁵⁶

These facts are confirmed by Anna Politkovskaya, who wrote on February 1, 2001:

It is generally accepted that we Russians do not like ourselves much. Clear proof of this is the appalling state of our 195 pre-trial detention facilities in prisons. For the second year in succession the inspectors

of the Council of Europe have described conditions in these as tantamount to torture. Out of a total of over one million people in detention, almost 300,000 are awaiting verdicts in pre-trial detention facilities and prisons. According to Oleg Mironov, the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Russian Federation, 85,000 of these have no place to sleep (the facilities and prisons are 226.3 per cent over capacity), more than 90,000 are suffering from an active form of tuberculosis, and more than 5,000 are HIV-positive. Nor are prisoners given an easy time by their warders: in 1999, 3,583 officers in the penal system were punished for violations of the law and 106 were charged with crimes committed in the course of their duties. Their activities directly affect almost two million people, since that is the number of prisoners who each year pass through Russia's pre-trial detention facilities, almost twice the number of people serving a sentence imposed by a court. The main reason for this is unjustified arrest, which remains the usual means of fighting crime: as a result every fifth man in Russia has experienced prison. In 1999, 263,646 complaints were received by the Prosecutor's Office about the methods of investigation and questioning used by members of the Interior Ministry, and one in four was upheld. Seventy percent of complaints about court verdicts received in 1999 by the Human Rights Ombudsman contain claims that violence was used to obtain testimony during interrogation or preliminary investigation, and that this led to the imposition of an unjust sentence.⁵⁷

Baby booms and angry young men

Criminality is, in general, a *man's* affair, and, to be more specific: a young men's affair. Prisoners tend to be young men, because young men tend to be more violent and more prone to criminal behavior. In a society with relatively many young men, especially when a large percentage of them are unemployed, there will be a greater chance of higher crime rates. Here again, we have an interesting parallel between Weimar and post-Soviet Russia: in both situations we have similar demographic situations which led to a relative overrepresentation of young people in the population. Germany, around 1900, experienced a rapid demographic growth that led to a baby boom. The results of this boom came to be felt 20 years later, when these young people entered the (depressed) labor market: "The baby boomers of the age cohort born around 1900 were everywhere, pressing on the very limited, sometimes nonexistent, jobs in industry and government."⁵⁸ The baby boomers

appeared on the labor market just after the war. Many had lost their father or an older brother on the battlefield. This demographic loss had already started before the war, because a dramatic decline of the birth rate had already begun around 1910. The gradual ageing of the population raised the specter of the *Volkstod* (People's Death) and led to a eugenic population policy being debated. Most important, however, was that this situation led to prolonged youth unemployment. Skilled and highly educated young people had more trouble finding jobs than unskilled workers. "Thus, young people were in Weimar Germany, because of their high number, at the same time, especially prominent, and, because of their difficult integration, especially marginalized. This was one of the breeding grounds for a new elitist discourse about those of 'lesser value' and those of 'higher value', and, probably, a major reason for the early and especially high support among students (up to 60%) for the then still small NSDAP of the 1920s."⁵⁹ The baby boom of the first decade of the century had, therefore, two destabilizing effects on the situation in Weimar: it led to higher criminality and it led to a growth of the NSDAP.⁶⁰

In post-Soviet Russia we have an almost identical situation. The population of Russia grew until the demise of the Soviet Union. In 1991 its population even reached a peak of 148,689,000. In the early years of Gorbachev's perestroika the total fertility rate (the number of births expected of a woman of childbearing age) climbed to 2.2 and led to a baby boom. This situation changed dramatically after 1991. The total fertility rate declined rapidly. In 1999 it was 1.17 and in 2005 1.3.⁶¹ Combined with a declining life expectancy this led to an absolute decline of the Russian population from 148,689,000 in 1991 to 141,927,297 in January, 2010. This leads to a similar situation as in Weimar: between 2005 and 2015 the age cohort between 20 and 30 years is over-represented in the Russian population. It is especially the young men of this cohort who are prone to criminal behavior and who are attracted by political extremism.

Bribery and corruption

The health of a society can also be measured by the level of corruption. In France there is a popular proverb: "le poisson pourrit par la tête" (the fish rots from the head down). And this is exactly true for corruption. Corruption does not start with the petty crimes of the people "below," but with corruption of the elite at the top from where it spreads like a contagious disease to infect the body of society. Corruption is a

top-down process. In Weimar Germany there was the renowned “Barmat scandal” which broke out at the end of 1924. The scandal was named after two rich Amsterdam wholesale merchants, Julius and Henry Barmat, who had contacts with the Social-Democratic government. Not only were Anton Hofle, the Minister of Posts and Wilhelm Richter the Police President of Prussia directly involved, but also was the former socialist chancellor, Gustav Bauer. They had all received large sums of money. The affair was one of the reasons for the defeat of the Social Democratic candidate at the presidential elections in 1925, when the Conservative Paul von Hindenburg was elected by a small margin. Although it would be going too far to blame Hitler’s rise to power on this instance of corruption, there is nevertheless an indirect connection, because it was President Hindenburg who would appoint Hitler German Chancellor in 1933.

In contemporary Russia, corruption and bribery are rampant. According to the “Corruption Perceptions Index” of *Transparency International*, an index that ranks countries in terms of the degree to which local business people and non-resident analysts perceive corruption to exist among public officials and politicians, in 2009 Russia came one hundred and forty-sixth in a total of 165 countries—ahead some failed states and a few of the poorest African countries.⁶² Another index indicates the propensity of companies of leading exporting countries to bribe abroad. In 2008, Russia came bottom of this “Bribe Payers’ Index” out of a total of 22 countries.⁶³ Russia, therefore, must not only be considered a champion on the demand side of bribery, but also on the supply side. There is still another interesting detail with respect to Russian bribery abroad. This is the fact that while companies from other countries tend to bribe low-level public officials “to speed things up,” or use personal and family relationships, Russian companies often bribe high-level public officials, an approach which has its origin in the communist past in which Soviet state firms directly negotiated with ministries of foreign governments. These attempts to bribe high-level public officials from other countries can go to very high levels, as is revealed by the authors of the *Mitrokhin Archive*, who spoke about “the hopelessly unrealistic KGB schemes, all doubtless approved by the political leadership, to recruit Harold Wilson, Willy Brandt, Oskar Lafontaine, Cyrus Vance, Zbigniew Brzezinski and other senior Western statesmen.”⁶⁴ Despite its dire record, Russia joined OECD’s convention to outlaw bribery in May 2011 as a full participant. This is a supply side scheme: countries that sign up must pass laws making it an offense for their firms or citizens to pay, to promise, or to offer money or any

other reward in exchange for favors from officials in other countries. According to *The Economist*, "Cynics might find Russian support for a stringent anti-bribery regime akin to an inveterate alcoholic joining a campaign for total abstinence."⁶⁵

As for perceptions within Russia itself, in September 2008, 74 percent of the population believed that the level of corruption in Russia was either "high" or "very high."⁶⁶ Other polls showed that 29 percent of the citizens and 56 percent of businesspeople in the same period actually had paid a bribe.⁶⁷ Aleksandr Panarin, Dean of Moscow's Diplomatic Academy, someone who certainly has no interest in exaggerating the situation, wrote: "According to the assessments of experts, shadow capital which has a complete criminal nature, now controls more than 40% of the national economy; about one half of all starting capital in the private sector of the economy has a criminal origin. The size of the racket is growing at a terrific pace—it controls the whole field of socio-economic activities. If yesterday it was satisfied by taking a percentage from the chambers of commerce, today it controls practically all business activities, and tomorrow it may encompass the whole government sector."⁶⁸ It is no secret that corruption and mafia-related activities in Russian government circles are rampant.⁶⁹ Even the—already high—corruption in the Russian army seems still to be on the rise.⁷⁰ Ironically, corruption is especially widespread in those agencies whose task is to fight crime, such as the police, the attorney general's office, and the judiciary. In April 2010, for instance, "German prosecutors suspected former executives of HP [Hewlett-Packard] to have paid 8 million euros under the table. The irony of the case is that it concerned a contract of 35 million euros signed with the service of the general attorney of Russia (...) which has the task of fighting corruption."⁷¹

In conclusion we can say that there are in total at least six similarities between the security situation in Weimar Germany and that of post-Soviet Russia. The first similarity concerns the considerable number of murders, including political murders that are committed. The second is that the majority of these murders go unpunished. A third similarity is the involvement of ex-soldiers and members of militias. In Weimar Germany, it was officers and soldiers returning from the First World War; in Russia alleged (hired) killers include former contract soldiers, police officers, or Chechen militias who fought on the Russian side. A fourth similarity is the suspicion of active support for these crimes, respectively a passive disregard from the side of the government, the police, and the judiciary to find the perpetrators and their principals and to bring them to justice. A fifth similarity is the presence of a baby

boom which led to a overrepresentation in the population of a cohort of angry, young men, prone to violent behavior and to harboring extremist views. A sixth similarity, finally, are the overcrowded prisons.

An uncivil civil society: Lacking trust and social capital

Crime, murder, overcrowded prisons, corruption, and bribery: these are all symptoms of a sick society, a society that is not a *societas*, but a society of atomized individuals who lack social cohesion and mutual trust, or—to say it in the words of sociologist Robert Putnam—who lack “social capital.”

Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects,” wrote Putnam, “and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called “civic virtue.” The difference is that “social capital” calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital.⁷²

A lack of trust and social capital could be expected in Weimar Germany which had fought—and lost—a long and bloody war on two fronts. In this war over 2 million young Germans had been killed, and 4 million had returned wounded and disabled from the battlefields in the East or the muddy trenches of Flanders and Northern France. Those who had been fortunate enough to come back healthy could not find appropriate jobs. To the misery of everyday life was added the gloom of a lost war. But however bad the situation in post-First World War Germany was with its negative legacy of the conservative, authoritarian, pre-war monarchy, there was still one important positive point. Since Frederick the Great started his reforms in eighteenth-century Prussia, Germany had made great progress in establishing a *Rechtsstaat*, a state of law that restricted the freedom of action of the state and provided legal security to its citizens.⁷³ This legal security had been the basis of a flourishing civil society in pre-First World War Germany. However, post-Soviet Russia was nothing like this. The Soviet Union was a totalitarian country in which an independent civil society simply did not exist. There was no freedom of assembly and association, no freedom of the press. The judiciary was politicized, corrupt, and not independent.

Citizens were not protected by the law. As a result, the police forces were not regarded by the citizens as protectors of their security, but as a direct physical threat. "The Russian police," wrote David Satter, "are organized to support the political authorities against society."⁷⁴ "The atmosphere of physical insecurity created by the ineffectiveness of the police pervades Russian society, undermining the very notion of rule by law. Russians have come to think of their world as completely lawless and to assume that, in dealing with crime and intimidation, they are completely on their own."⁷⁵ In the period of Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* an independent and free civil society had to be invented and created from scratch. According to Francis Fukuyama,

In police states, the importance of informal social norms in controlling crime is made evident when formal controls are relaxed. People in authoritarian or totalitarian societies often obey the law more strictly than their counterparts in democratic societies do, but we would not be inclined to say that their law-abidingness necessarily represents an abundance of social capital. It may instead reflect fear of draconian punishment meted out by an omnipresent and repressive state. Under such conditions, crime frequently increases when the state collapses and people no longer fear the police. This happened throughout the former communist world, where crime rates rose dramatically after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. *What we were witnessing was not a precipitous drop in social capital in Russia, Hungary, Poland, and other countries, but rather the revelation that levels of social capital were low or depleted under communism to begin with.* This should not surprise us, since the objective of Marxist-Leninism was to stamp out an independent civil society and the horizontal ties between citizens on which civil society was based.⁷⁶

Sociologists, who in 2005 conducted a survey on trust in two republics of the Russian Federation, found "that most people are cautious about others. A little more than 60%, on average, say that you 'always need to be careful' in dealing with others (...). Around 20% say that most people can be trusted, and a roughly similar proportion responds that 'it depends.' Generalized trust, then, is low."⁷⁷ The lack of a strong civil society in Russia was deplored by Anna Politkovskaya, who, herself, fought a heroic uphill battle to establish such an independent civil society, something for which she paid with her life. In *A Russian Diary* she wrote: "We are sometimes called a society of millions of slaves and a handful of masters, and told that is how it will be for centuries to

come, a continuation of the serf-owning system. We often speak about ourselves in that way too, but I never do.”⁷⁸ Elsewhere she wrote: “We know what we need, but lack the tenacity to fight for it. We give up almost immediately. Life passes by while we wait for our aspirations to be bestowed on us from above, as in 1991 when a coup within the elite was latterly supported by the people.”⁷⁹ She deplored the fact that “unfortunately, in the heart of most Russians is an urge not to stand out, and it is particularly in evidence today. We do not want to attract the evil eye of repressive institutions. We want to stay in the shadows. What you get up to in the shadows depends on your personality. Many would not want to emerge under any circumstances; there is a striving for self-improvement, of course, but keeping to the shadows lies much deeper in the heart of every Russian. After all that has happened here in the twentieth century alone, it is perhaps hardly surprising.”⁸⁰ It was, indeed, hardly surprising: not only if one takes into account what happened in the twentieth century, but equally if one takes into account what is still happening *today*. The fact, mentioned by Politkovskaya, that *one fifth* of today’s Russian adult male population has experienced prison—in many cases after having being arrested without any legal grounds—is not only frightening, but it means two things. First, that all male citizens are considered *potential suspects* by the repressive organs of the state, and, second, that the prison system—despite some cosmetic changes, such as the introduction of a Human Rights Ombudsman—still functions as it did in former totalitarian times: as a means to *intimidate* ordinary citizens.⁸¹

Not only intimidation, also *mutual isolation* of citizens is an old and tested recipe, used by authoritarian rulers in order to eradicate any opposition. Tocqueville wrote: “Despotism, which is, by nature, fearful, regards isolation of the people as the most certain guarantee of its own duration, and normally it does everything to isolate them. There is no vice of the human heart which pleases it as much as egoism: a despot easily forgives his subjects not to love him, on the condition that they don’t love each other.”⁸² Sowing distrust among the citizens has been used as a weapon by Russian tsars ever since 1565, when Ivan the Terrible first founded a political police, the so-called *oprichniki*. Second to none in cruelty (except to their master), these 6,000 men, dressed in black, riding black horses, carrying a broom and a dog’s head at their saddles “to sweep away treason,” established a reign of terror in sixteenth-century Russia.⁸³ The modernizing tsar Peter the Great organized his secret police in a bureaucratic and efficient “Bureau of Information” with thousands of spies. In the nineteenth century, after

the revolt of the Decembrists, the repressive and autocratic tsar Nicholas I organized the secret police in the Third Section of his Imperial chancellery. His equally autocratic grandson, Alexander III, renamed it *Okhrana*, which became an omnipresent organization with many local branches and even bureaus abroad. Assisted by the Orthodox Church it prefigured the totalitarian control which later would be exercised by its communist successor organizations, the last of which was the KGB. A society which, from top to bottom, is infiltrated by secret police, spies and informants, is not capable of generating trust among its citizens who know that every encounter with a stranger can be an encounter with a possible informant of the secret police. However, trust is the cement which holds a civil society together and makes it function. In a civil society it is "central to the definition of trust (...) that it involves one in a relation where the acts, character, or intentions of the other cannot be confirmed."⁸⁴ "Trust then involves a vulnerability occasioned by some form of ignorance or basic uncertainty as to the other's motives."⁸⁵ Robert Putnam has made the important observation that trust is not only a personal, psychological quality of the *individual*, but that it is also a property of a *social system*.

Trust itself is an emergent property of the social system, as much as a personal attribute. Individuals are able to be trusting (...) because of the social norms and networks within which their actions are embedded. Stocks of social capital, such as trust, norms, and networks, tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative. Virtuous circles result in social equilibria with high levels of cooperation, trust, reciprocity, civic engagement, and collective well-being. These traits define the civic community. Conversely, the absence of these traits in the uncivil community is also self-reinforcing. Defection, distrust, shirking, exploitation, isolation, disorder, and stagnation intensify one another in a suffocating miasma of vicious circles (...) Once trapped in this situation, no matter how exploitative and backward, it is irrational for any individual to seek a more collaborative alternative, except perhaps within the immediate family. The "amoral familism" (...) is, in fact, not irrational, but the only rational strategy for survival in this social context.⁸⁶

This means that for individuals living in an uncivil society, even when they are motivated by the best intentions vis-à-vis their fellow citizens, it will prove impossible to change this situation. Once trapped in this vicious circle, the social constraint of the uncivil environment becomes

a heavy burden. The only way out—apart from emigration—seems to create one's own niche in this unfavorable setting by relying on one's relatives ("familism") and close friends. If one is conscious of this overwhelming power of an existing, historically grown situation, it becomes clear why even Anna Politkovskaya, who criticized the passive behavior of her compatriots, showed a certain understanding of it. Russian society is weighed down by a centuries-old heavy burden. It is haunted and hampered by an almost invincible force of inertia which discourages individual citizens from even attempting to change the system—except those, like Anna Politkovskaya, who show a heroic courage. In the West there exists a false image of "the Russian," lacking a sense of freedom, thought to be psychologically inborn, just like his supposedly "natural" submissiveness to a strong and authoritarian state. Russians, however, are not essentially different from other people and the long succession of peasant revolts against autocratic rule in Russian history is clear evidence of this.

The problem of Russia's uncivil society lies not so much in the individual psychology of the average Russian, as in its *systemic* character. An uncivil society, when it is in place, functions like a magical circle from which one cannot escape. This uncivil society was mostly a conscious creation—first of the tsarist police state and later of the communist totalitarian state. Because it was a top-down creation, efforts by citizens to change this situation can only be effective if the state eventually respects the fundamental freedoms of its citizens and develops an independent judiciary. This is confirmed by the authors of the aforementioned sociological survey, who found "that faith in political institutions bolsters cross-ethnic trust. But the Russian government has been rated as increasingly undemocratic since the late 1990s. This all implies that the key feature connecting confidence in government to cross-ethnic trust need not be the degree of democracy or transparency, as some authors suggest. It may simply be the provision of stable rules of the game."⁸⁷ The authors seem to suggest that the introduction of a functioning *Rechtsstaat* would be enough to boost trust in contemporary Russia and that democracy would be less urgently needed. The model for such a development would be nineteenth-century Germany. The problem, however, is that it is improbable that an independent judiciary with a viable rule of law can be sustained in an undemocratic environment in which the leadership places itself above the law. Such a leadership cannot tolerate a truly independent judiciary, for the simple reason that it would potentially undermine its power. In the 1930s, Germany has amply showed that a *Rechtsstaat* cannot survive without

a functioning democracy. The introduction of a really independent judiciary in Russia presupposes a democratic and reform-minded leadership of which today's ruling oligarchy, dominated by the Chekists of the former KGB, is the exact opposite.

In the present situation, Russian citizens are confronted with a choice between what Albert O. Hirschman has called: exit or voice. "Voice" means that one protests and tries to reform the system from within; "exit" means that one does not believe in the possibility of reform and chooses to leave. "The voice option," wrote Hirschman, "is the only way in which dissatisfied customers or members can react whenever the exit option is unavailable. This is very nearly the situation in such basic social organizations as the family, the state, or the church."⁸⁸ Hirschman is right that leaving the family for a family member or leaving the church for a true believer, will be extremely difficult (although not impossible). Leaving a state, however, is for a citizen a viable option, although it is sometimes forbidden by the authorities (*Republikflucht*—escape from the republic—was for instance a crime in the former German Democratic Republic). It is telling that in a survey of people aged 25–39, living in big cities and earning five to ten times the average income, conducted for the *Novaya Gazeta* in May 2011 by pollster Levada Center, almost a third wanted to emigrate permanently. For the students and the entrepreneurs in the sample, these figures were over 50 percent!⁸⁹ These people were neither dissidents nor revolutionaries. Forty-seven percent had no political interest or was passive, and one-third was said to vote for the Kremlin party United Russia. It is telling that the liberal and democratic opposition parties, such as Yabloko and the Greens, only got minimal support: between 2 and 0.3 percent. "With other words," wrote the author, "also the opposition parties do not inspire trust or are not considered serious opponents of the government, acting as support."⁹⁰ According to Vladimir Mau, Russia's leading economic historian, Russians "would rather exchange their country than change it."⁹¹ Hirschman already warned that "the presence of the exit alternative (...) tend[s] to atrophy the development of the art of voice."⁹² It is certain that the protest potential in Russia will significantly diminish when a substantial part of the brightest, best educated, and most pro-active young people emigrates because this is the very group which, normally, takes the lead in protests.⁹³ This massive display of a clear "exit" attitude, although partly an expression of the wish to improve individual career perspectives, is a good indication of the level of frustration experienced by the younger generation which seems to be pessimistic about the chances to break the magic circle

of authoritarianism and uncivil society in their home country. Asked about the causes of their discontent, 49 percent mentioned corruption among public servants, 48 percent the high crime rate, and 39 percent the moral decay of society.⁹⁴ The protest movement which, in the fall and winter of 2011–2012, took to the streets, is, therefore, a sign of hope. The “voice” expressed by this movement was at the same time an expression of “loyalty”: loyalty not to a corrupt government, but to the people and its right to determine its own future.

3

The “Weimar Parallel”: Socio-Psychological Aspects

The cluster of **socio-psychological** aspects of the Weimar Parallel contains the following elements:

- feelings of humiliation
- the development of “stab in the back” theories
- the emergence of conspiracy theories
- the problem of how to manage guilt

Feelings of humiliation

The Germans felt humiliated and unfairly treated in 1919 by the Western powers, due to the harsh conditions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. However, the same cannot be said of Russia in 1989–1991. Neither did it lose a war, nor were there any unfair peace conditions imposed on it by foreign powers. Its demise was totally due to its internal weakness. Surprisingly, there is also a striking similarity with the German case. The feelings of humiliation in 1918–1919 were strengthened by the fact that the German armies surrendered while still occupying foreign soil.¹ This gave the impression that the defeat was undeserved. This was also the case at the time that the Soviet Union fell apart. In January 1992 Russian troops were not only present at many bases all over the former Soviet Union, but also in the countries of the Warsaw Pact.² For the Germans the loss of empire was the consequence of a military defeat. For the Russians the loss of empire—as far as the Soviet Union itself was concerned—was mainly, but certainly not only, the consequence of an internal power struggle between Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and Russian President Boris Yeltsin. By dismembering the Soviet Union, Yeltsin abolished the function of his rival and came out as the winner

of the contest.³ In contrast to the dismemberment of imperial Germany at Versailles, the fall of the Soviet Union was not imposed by any foreign power. It was the result of a popular movement which started in the Baltic states and was followed by a soft coup d'état by the leaders of the federal republics against the central power. The demise of the Soviet Union was self-inflicted. The Russians in 1991–1992, therefore, had less reasons to feel humiliated than the Germans in 1918. At least, one would think so. In reality, feelings of humiliation *did* emerge, if not immediately, in the beginning, then later, when NATO and the EU began to expand into the former Soviet space.⁴

The “stab in the back” legend in Weimar

If a nation experiences a loss as a consequence of a military defeat or as a consequence of internal turmoil, soon a blame game will start in which the different parties try to shift the responsibility for the negative situation to others. We see this mechanism at work in Weimar Germany, as well as in post-Soviet Russia. This blame game was in the first place an *international* blame game. After the First World War the Allied countries accused Germany of being solely responsible for the war. “It is not surprising therefore,” wrote A. J. P. Taylor, “that German historians took up the struggle against ‘the lie of war-guilt’. They did not need to prove that Germany had always been right; it was enough for them to show that she had not always been wrong. The first republican Government employed Kautsky to make a very full publication of the German records on the events immediately preceding the outbreak of war. This did not serve the German purpose. For it seemed to show that, whatever the faults of others, the German Government was very much to blame.”⁵

This international blame game coincided with an *internal*, German blame game. In Weimar Germany, the military leadership immediately blamed the democratic government of the new republic for the defeat of 1918. It used for this the “stab in the back” legend (*Dolchstoßlegende*). The “stab in the back” theory was already suggested by General Major Hans von Seeckt during the war, before the German revolution. Von Seeckt asked in July 1917: “Why are we still fighting? The fatherland has attacked us in the back and thereby we lost the war.”⁶ But the precise expression stabbed in the back was probably used for the first time in the autumn of 1918 by General Rupprecht in his recommendation for an investigatory committee of the parliament. Rupprecht wrote: “The revolution has on the last moment stabbed the army in the back.”⁷ Field Marshall von Hindenburg repeated this in a committee hearing in

parliament on November 18, 1919. Hindenburg pretended to quote an (unknown) English general: "An English general said with justice: 'The German army was stabbed in the back.'"⁸ The people who were accused by the German commander of having stabbed the German army in the back were the revolutionaries who chased the Kaiser and replaced the imperial regime with a modern democratic republic. According to Jack Snyder, "Field Marshall von Hindenburg told the commission investigating the causes of the defeat that the heroic German officer corps had been 'stabbed in the back' by pacifists and socialists. He charged that they had accepted Russian money, consciously sought to demoralize the troops, and fomented revolution on the home front. Hindenburg was never cross-examined, and the findings of the commission, which failed to support this view, were stamped secret. Historians now agree that the conservatives' image of the 'undefeated army' undermined on the home front is baseless: in the wake of mounting battlefield setbacks, a strike by German soldiers ended the war."⁹ This did not prevent the stab in the back theory to become a broadly accepted pseudo truth. According to Herfried Münkler, "In the years after the end of the war the formula of the stab in the back had become so accepted that it did not need a proof any more."¹⁰ And it is, therefore, no surprise that the formula emerged in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.¹¹

The "stab in the back" legend in post-Soviet Russia

In post-Soviet Russia we see the same mechanism at work. Equally here a "stab in the back" theory emerged at the moment that the population had its first negative experiences with the newly introduced Western-style democracy and market economy. The collapse of the Russian economy, caused by the disintegration of the old communist structures, was aggravated by the capitalist shock therapy prescribed by the Chicago Boys of the monetarist Milton Friedman, who advised the Yeltsin government. Yeltsin, in 1993 confronted with an unfriendly majority of communists and Zhirinovskiy's crypto-fascists in the Supreme Soviet, who wanted to impeach him, attacked the parliament building with tanks, which was a rather unusual introduction to the methods of the new, highly praised Western parliamentary democracy that he pretended to defend. The result was a growing disappointment among the population with a market economy that, instead of the promised prosperity, only seemed to bring poverty. There was equal disappointment with a democracy that had replaced the immobile, but with hindsight preferable stability of the communist

order by permanent turmoil and chaos. Soon a search for scapegoats began and—in a repeat of the “stab in the back” legend—a group of “internal enemies” was identified. These internal enemies were the *zapadniki*, the Westernizers, adepts of the liberal market economy and of Western-style democracy. In the beginning politicians and presidential advisers were blamed, such as Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev, and Anatoly Chubais, who masterminded the privatizations.¹² However, when these men had left the political scene, the focus of the attacks changed. The activists of the new non-governmental organizations, especially those who received funding from the West, were increasingly targeted as a “fifth column” in the service of hostile, foreign powers. But they were not the only ones. General Mikhail Kalashnikov, the inventor of the eponymous assault rifle, who *did* actually use the term “stabbed in the back,” went so far as to blame the old nomenklatura and the young communists of the Komsomol for the demise of the Soviet Union. “We did not lose from the Americans,” he wrote, “it was our party bosses who have stabbed us in the back with a dagger. (...) The vermin of the nomenklatura and the Young communists has killed us.”¹³

Conspiracy theories: Combating internal and external foes

The “stab in the back” theory is a conspiracy theory that emerged in both Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia. It is a theory about an internal enemy. But this theory has as its necessary complement the theory of a foreign complot, destined to weaken and destroy the fatherland. In contemporary Russia, Aleksandr Dugin is the mind behind such a complot theory. One of his main works even carries the title *Konspirologiya* (conspiracy theory).¹⁴ The first two parts of this book (which is available online) are dedicated to all kind of bizarre and occult theories. In the last four parts he develops his geopolitical views. It is here that Dugin unveils the identity of the secret internal and external enemies of Russia. The external enemy is, according to him, in the first place the United States, especially the neoconservatives, who are inspired by the philosopher Leo Strauss. And who are the enemies *inside* Russia? These are the “Atlanticists.” To one’s great surprise one finds here the name of Nikita Khrushchev. According to Dugin, Khrushchev was an “agent of Atlanticism.” Less surprising is the name of Mikhail Gorbachev, ironically dubbed “Mister Perestroika” by him. For Dugin, there is no doubt: Gorbachev was “a double agent.” In his paranoia, Dugin even goes so far as to distinguish an “Atlanticist lobby” inside

the KGB, the very heart of the Soviet system. Perhaps this is a reason to laugh. But one should not laugh too hard. Dugin is the leader of the Eurasian Movement, of which many prominent Russians are members. His ideas have become rather popular in recent years.

It is a characteristic of conspiracy theories that internal and external enemies are closely working together in a combined effort. The internal enemy does its best to weaken the resistance of the country. The foreign powers encircle it. In Weimar Germany it was the Allied countries, in the first place France, which were considered eternal hostile forces, intent on curtailing Germany's legitimate national ambitions. In post-Soviet Russia, after a short honeymoon with the West, it was especially the Anglo-Saxon countries, the United States and the United Kingdom, that were demonized. In Russia, as in Weimar, the combination of a "stab in the back" theory and an encirclement syndrome led to a *bunker mentality*: the feeling of being permanently besieged by unknown internal enemies and hostile foreign powers.¹⁵ A bunker mentality leads to a distorted, black-and-white view of reality in which all nuances and shades of grey tend to disappear. The other is either friend or foe.

During Weimar this "friend or foe" theory found its deepest expression in the works of Carl Schmitt, the Nazi ideologue who is one of Dugin's spiritual godfathers. In his book *Der Begriff des Politischen* (The Concept of the Political), which was published in 1932, Carl Schmitt considered that the essence of politics is not the creation of a free and self-governing society, but the distinction between friend and foe. A foe is for him not a personal enemy. It is "the other, the stranger." "One cannot rationally deny," wrote Schmitt, "that peoples tend to group themselves according to the friend-foe opposition."¹⁶ Schmitt's friend-foe opposition was intended to give politics a value opposition similar to the value oppositions in other domains: "Let us assume that in the field of morals the last criteria are good and bad," he wrote, "in aesthetics beautiful and ugly; in economics useful and harmful or, for instance, profitable and not profitable."¹⁷ Schmitt, a convinced Machiavellian, wanted to give politics its own value system in order to completely separate it from moral values. But the friend-foe opposition is devised on different level from the good-bad, beautiful-ugly or profitable-not profitable oppositions. The last three indicate respectively moral, aesthetic and economic values or non-values. The friend-foe opposition does not indicate a value opposition, but only a way of connectedness with others.¹⁸ "Friends" and "foes" are, according to Carl Schmitt, defined in function of their capacity to respectively enhance or diminish the power of one's own state. It is clear that this is not only

an a-moral definition of politics, but potentially an immoral definition. What is, for instance, the positive value of a friendly power that is an ally of the genocidal Third Reich?

It may not come as a surprise that also Vladimir Putin, who, as a former spy, has professionally been trained to think in “friend or foe” categories, sees the world in terms of a “complot.” Addressing the Russian public on TV on September 4, 2004, after the Beslan school hostage crisis, Putin said: “We showed weakness, and we were trampled upon. Some want to cut off a juicy morsel from us while others are helping them. They are helping because they believe that, as one of the world’s major nuclear powers, Russia is still posing a threat to someone, and therefore this threat must be removed.”¹⁹

Managing guilt: The unbearable burden

Another similarity between Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia is the inability of the political leadership and the respective populations to feel and express any sentiment of guilt toward the victims of their countries’ past policies. The leaders of the Weimar Republic were totally astounded by Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, which stated that “Germany accepts the responsibility (...) for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed on them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.”²⁰ To accept *responsibility* for the war, and to speak of German *aggression* was out of the question. In Versailles, the German Foreign Minister, Count Ulrich Von Brockdorff-Rantzau, made a speech in which he rejected all talk of an exclusive German guilt: “The demand is made that we shall acknowledge that we alone are guilty of having caused the war. Such a confession,” he said, “in my mouth would be a lie.”²¹ A heated debate then followed in Germany in which respectable democrats also took part. Most of them unreservedly denied any German guilt, although it was Germany that had started the war and invaded neutral Belgium.²² Even Ernst Troeltsch, a respected and well-known Protestant theologian, wrote in an article that “the dogma of German guilt is as endemic to the modern court of inquisition as it was to the inquisition of the Middle Ages.”²³ This denial of guilt by the Germans after the First World War stands in considerable contrast with their sincere guilt feelings after the Second World War, in which—that must be said—the severity of the committed crimes—including a genocide—was, of course, much greater. But also other nations have learned to express their guilt. Edward Lucas,

for instance, wrote that "British guilt about imperial massacres and exploitation is so embedded in the school curriculum that pupils are genuinely surprised to find out that anyone argues that the empire had redeeming features at all."²⁴

Stalinist atrocities

This, however, cannot be said of post-Soviet Russia. Any guilt for atrocities committed toward other peoples has systematically been denied. According to R. J. Rummel, who has tried to estimate the number of victims of government repression in history, "the Soviets committed a democide of almost 62 million people, over 7 million of them foreigners. This staggering total is beyond belief." It is, he continued, "over four times the battle dead (15 million) for all nations in the Second World War." Of these 62 million, "nearly 54,800,000 of them citizens, have been murdered by the Communist Party—the government—of the Soviet Union."²⁵ They were killed "in cold blood," "guilty of nothing." The mass murder included "the intentional starvation to death of about 5 million Ukrainian peasants in 1932–33."²⁶

As a rule, two arguments are used to put into question the attribution of guilt to the Russian people and leadership. The first argument is that most victims of Communist and Stalinist repression and warfare were Russian. Most Russians considered themselves victims, not perpetrators. This feeling was expressed by Galina Starovoitova, former adviser to President Yeltsin, who said: "Our nation hasn't undergone the process of penitence after the adoption of totalitarianism, and the predominant feeling is that all of us were victims of the regime."²⁷ The second argument is that the Stalinist repression had a totalitarian character, which means that the repression was so ruthless, total and all-embracing that any serious resistance of the Russian population was excluded.²⁸ Both arguments have a certain validity. Many Russians were victims of Stalin's repression and active resistance could have led to one's loss of life. This last fact was recognized by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers—himself an anti-Nazi—who in his book *On the Question of Guilt* (1946) mentioned this "guilt of passivity" (*Schuld der Passivität*) and wrote: "Powerlessness exculpates; effective death is not required."²⁹ The extreme totalitarian repression was, therefore, certainly an alleviating circumstance. But at the same time there were many Russians who actively participated in Stalin's crimes and others who just let them happen without asking any questions. Despite the existence of alleviating circumstances, therefore, the problem of guilt remains. This was equally

so in the German situation because it cannot be said that the German population during the Nazi period did not suffer, nor that they did not live under a suffocating totalitarian regime. Both facts did not prevent the German nation to begin an impressive process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) after the Second World War. This process implied a complete moral reorientation. How difficult this mental reformatting was becomes clear from the fact that in opinion polls conducted six years after the war Hitler still ranked as the most important German politician.³⁰ It was especially the younger generation that was conscious of the fact that such a moral reorientation was necessary. This does not mean that the Germans—as a people—were guilty. Karl Jaspers—rightly—wrote: “A people cannot be made into an individual. A people cannot perish in a heroic way, cannot be a criminal, cannot act in a moral or immoral way, but always only the individuals in it. A people as a totality cannot be guilty and cannot be innocent, neither in a criminal, nor in a political (...), nor in a moral sense.”³¹ Although one could in most cases not speak of personal guilt, nor even of collective guilt—as *Germans* they shared a collective responsibility for crimes in the past that were committed in their name. According to Jaspers, it was “the fact of being German” that made one feel “a co-responsibility for the acts being committed and having been committed by Germans.”³² After the war, Germans felt that it was their duty to become reconciled through a process of *Wiedergutmachung* (reparation),³³ that included material and symbolic compensation to the victims.³⁴

The question is whether such a responsibility still exists for the second, third, and later generations. Will the collective responsibility of a people for criminal acts committed by one’s government not diminish with the years? Maybe so. But Bernhard Schlink has stressed an important point. According to him, “as concerns the national socialist crimes, the juridical norms (...) discharge the coming generations, who go without guilt in the future.”³⁵ Does this mean that they can indulge in complacency, as, for instance, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl did, when he referred to ‘the grace of his late birth’ (*die Gnade der späten Geburt*)? No, because “they find themselves in a certain solidarity with the past generations and have to deal in a certain way with their guilt.”³⁶ This implies an *active* attitude: “[they] have to accept [this guilt] or reject it.”³⁷ Also later generations are, therefore, still confronted with a choice to assume responsibility for the crimes that are committed by preceding generations.³⁸ This active attitude is, unfortunately, almost completely lacking in Russia. Two cases can illustrate this situation: first, the Russian attitude toward the famine in Ukraine, and second,

the attitude toward the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the subsequent annexation of the Baltic Republics by Stalin.

The Ukrainian Holodomor: A genocide?

In 1930–1931 Stalin started the collectivization of agriculture. The *kulaks* (independent farmers), were expropriated and brought together in *kolchozy*, collective farms. Tens of thousands of farmers and their families who resisted, were executed or transported to concentration camps. Stalin's policies not only brought human suffering, but also caused an economic disaster. Faced with a bad harvest, chaotic organization, and the requisitions of huge quantities of grain by the state (to be sold abroad to pay for investments in heavy industry), a famine broke out in the spring of 1932. According to James Mace, "the Ukrainian famine was a deliberate act of genocide of roughly the same order of magnitude as the Jewish Holocaust of the Second World War, both in the number of its victims and in the human suffering it produced."³⁹ The famine, usually called the *Holodomor* (from Ukrainian *moryty holodom*: "to die from hunger"), has become a defining historical event for the Ukrainian nation and has for Ukrainians the same emotional significance as the Holocaust for Jews or the Armenian genocide for Armenians.⁴⁰ This famine was caused by six factors: first, the bad harvests of 1932–1933; second, Stalin's policies that expropriated the independent farmers (*kulaks*) and forced them into (much less productive) collective farms; third, the imposition on these farmers of extremely high quotas of agricultural products that were exported by the government to finance industrialization; fourth, a ban on migration which prevented the starving population from fleeing the famine zone; fifth, the refusal of Stalin to allow international food relief; sixth, Stalin's open contempt for the starving population, considered by him as "idlers," "class enemies" or "enemies of the people." The number of victims is estimated by some to be about 6 million.⁴¹ The fact is, however, that reliable data are lacking. In his book *Bloodlands*, Timothy Snyder mentions the Soviet census of 1937, which had a shortfall of 8 million people, most of whom famine victims, not only in Ukraine, but also in Russia and Kazakhstan.⁴² Snyder's estimate of the number of victims in Ukraine is approximately 3.3 million.⁴³ This seems a cautious estimate. What makes the crime even more appalling was that most of the victims were children. According to Helen Rappaport, "the estimated number of child deaths is put at 3 million."⁴⁴ It was President Kuchma who initiated the international campaign to designate the Holodomor

as “genocide.” Up to now 19 countries have recognized it as a genocide, including the United States, Canada, Australia, the Baltic states, Azerbaijan, Italy, Mexico and Paraguay. Since 2006, Ukraine officially celebrates a memorial day on the fourth Saturday of November. In 2009, Canada also enacted a Holodomor Memorial Day—to be celebrated too on the fourth Saturday of November. In January 2010, a court in Kyiv convicted Stalin and his helpers of genocide against the Ukrainian nation. However, shortly after Viktor Yanukovich became president, the case was adjourned and also the link to the genocide campaign was removed from the presidential website.⁴⁵ Yanukovich has adopted the Russian position that the famine was Soviet-wide, denying the claim that it was genocide. This pro-Russian stance was not much appreciated by many of his compatriots, who, however, could have been warned: in 2008 Yanukovich was the only CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) politician who supported the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.⁴⁶

The *volte-face* of Yanukovich, intended to appease the Russians, strengthened Russian unwillingness to face up to historical facts. The reactions of the Russian government and the Russian media to the genocide campaign were, generally, very negative, if not outright furious. The days of Mikhail Gorbachev, who in 1988 admitted that the famine had been deliberately used by Stalin as a means of coercion, have definitively passed. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, who was invited with other leaders to attend the commemoration in Kiev in November 2008, declined the invitation in a rather brusque manner, answering in a letter to President Yushchenko that also many Russians had perished. Vitaly Churkin, the Russian ambassador to the United Nations, said on this occasion: “The Ukrainian leadership is using this historical humanitarian tragedy for its own political ends, as well as to spread ethnic animosity (...) and divert the attention of its own people from the ongoing political and economic crisis in Ukraine.”⁴⁷ The central issue of the Russian-Ukrainian controversy is if the Holodomor can be called genocide. Legally this presupposes proof of a clear intention of Stalin’s regime, and, as long as the Russian archives are not fully accessible, this cannot be proved. Therefore the European Parliament has opted to condemn the Holodomor as a “crime against humanity” rather than genocide. International experts, however, have pleaded for a more relaxed definition of genocide which takes into consideration the unnecessary excess deaths that are the result of Stalin’s policies. Michael Ellman, for instance, favors this approach. He wrote: “One can estimate the excess deaths caused by Stalin’s acts of

omission and commission. If one assumes that humanitarian aid and purchases could have generated half a million tonnes of grain imports (...), then failing to permit international relief and to import grain caused 1.5 million excess deaths. (...) The migration ban may have cost 150,000 lives (...) Grain exports in 1932–1933 were enough to feed more than five million people for one year (...) These crude estimates show that without Stalin's acts of omission and commission, and with efficient organisation of relief, it might well have been possible to feed the entire population even with two bad harvests—had feeding the entire population been Stalin's top priority."⁴⁸ According to Timothy Snyder Stalin knew about the famine, emphasizing that on "18 June, 1932, Stalin himself admitted, privately, that there was 'famine' in Soviet Ukraine."⁴⁹ This was not a reason for him to take urgent measures to save the lives of the endangered population. On the contrary, "starving Ukrainian peasants, he complained, were leaving their home republic and demoralizing other Soviet citizens by their 'whining.'"⁵⁰ This supports Ellman's thesis of Stalin's "acts of omission and commission." Stalin did nothing to stop the human catastrophe and he did nothing while being fully conscious of the results. Stalin's forced collectivization also produced many victims in other Soviet republics. President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, for instance, gave the following numbers for Kazakhstan: "From 1931 to 1933 more than one and a half million Kazakhs and another half a million people of other nationalities died from the famine which was deliberately started by the authorities."⁵¹ Note that for Nazarbayev there existed not a single doubt about the genocidal intent of the famine in Kazakhstan: he spoke of a famine which was *deliberately* started by the authorities.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the annexation of the Baltic states

The Russian government not only has been very reluctant and unwilling to assume any Russian responsibility and guilt vis-à-vis crimes committed against the Ukrainian people. It is equally unwilling to assume responsibility for the material damage and human suffering caused by Stalin's regime in the three Baltic republics that were annexed by Stalin in 1939 following the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In the spring of 2005, a diplomatic row emerged between the three Baltic countries on the one hand, and Russia on the other, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany. Moscow had invited the three Baltic heads of state, but only the Latvian President,

Vaira Vike-Freiberga, accepted the invitation. It was arranged that she would sign with Putin an agreement to recognize the borders between the two states the following day. Vike-Freiberga insisted the joint declaration would include an official apology by Moscow for the Soviet occupation and a recognition of Latvia's continuing statehood with the pre-war Republic of Latvia. This was flatly refused by Moscow. A few days before the event, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement that was an example of byzantine legalistic complexity, a reminder old Soviet times. It read as follows:

The term "occupation" cannot be used for a legal assessment of the situation in the Baltic countries in the late 1930s because there was no state of war between the USSR and the Baltic states and no military actions were being conducted, and the troops were introduced on the basis of an agreement and with the express consent of the authorities that existed in these Republics at the time. In addition, throughout the period, when Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were part of the Soviet Union, there were national bodies of power, with the exception of the time when that part of the USSR territory was occupied by Germany (...) These authorities, as represented by the Supreme Soviets of the corresponding Republics, made decisions in 1990 that led to their secession from the USSR. If one were to question the legitimacy of the power bodies of the Soviet period, the question arises of the legitimacy of the promulgation of independence by the Baltic Republics. Accordingly, any claims, including demands for material compensation for alleged damage, which was the result of what happened in 1940, are groundless.⁵²

The fact that the Baltic states were occupied without an official declaration of war and were unable to defend themselves militarily is used as a proof of the "express consent" of the authorities of the republics—something which evokes other historical instances where Russian troops were "invited." To couple the legitimacy of the promulgation of independence to the legitimacy of the Supreme Soviets of the Baltic Republics is a Soviet-style *trouvaille*. It denies the fact that the three Baltic republics, according to international law, always have remained legally sovereign and independent states during the Soviet occupation.⁵³

There was an interesting follow-up to the Latvian case when a governmental commission was appointed in Latvia to calculate the total damage that was caused during the years of Soviet occupation. In April

2009 the commission published its report: it calculated the damage at US\$200 billion. For its estimate the commission had used the economic performance indicators of Finland, Denmark, and the US from 1950–1990 to calculate the country's potential GDP growth if it had never been part of the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ When Latvia announced that it would claim compensation from Russia, the Russian reaction was vehement. A Russian analyst, Yuri Baranchik, wrote—completely in line with the previous text of the Foreign Ministry—that “the current Baltic leaders seem to have forgotten that all international regulations were observed when the Baltic republics were annexed to the Soviet Union in 1940.” And he continued: “The Balts have forgotten that without the ‘Soviet occupation’ they would have hardly regained their sovereignty, they would have disappeared from the world map in the aftermath of WW II. The Soviet Union saved these nations from destruction.”⁵⁵ Subsequently the author calculated how much these Republics had *cost* Russia: “Actually, Russia could also make its own calculations and demand that Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania pay those billions of dollars they had received from the Soviet Union as free aid.” It is quite normal that different nations have different opinions regarding historical events. Historical facts are often colored by different interpretations. This does, however, *not* mean that a more or less reliable truth, which is coercive for all parties, cannot be established. Hannah Arendt illustrated this with the following anecdote:

During the twenties, so a story goes, Clemenceau, shortly before his death, found himself engaged in a friendly talk with a representative of the Weimar Republic on the question of guilt for the outbreak of the First World War. “What, in your opinion,” Clemenceau was asked, “will future historians think of this troublesome and controversial issue?” He replied, “This I don’t know. But I know for certain that they will not say Belgium invaded Germany.”⁵⁶ Arendt’s comment: “We are concerned here with brutally elementary data of this kind, whose indestructibility has been taken for granted even by the most extreme and most sophisticated believers in historicism.”⁵⁷ Some historical facts cannot be denied or “reinterpreted”: they are simply too hard and too unequivocal. Clemenceau’s answer can easily be paraphrased, this time referring to the Soviet invasion of the three Baltic states in 1939: “I know for certain that they will not say the Baltic states invaded Soviet Russia.” And this is the crux of the story. This undeniable fact is essential for determining which government is to blame.

Neither the Russian government, nor a majority of the Russian population seems to be prepared to recognize the negative legacy of the imperial past. The reason for this is that there never has been a real public debate in Russia on the crimes of Stalin's regime and its consequences for Russian society. The modest beginnings of such a debate in the 1990s have been nipped in the bud by Putin, who has not made a secret of the fact that he is a great admirer of the *gensek* (Secretary General) Joseph Stalin, for whom his own grandfather worked as a cook. In the new school history textbooks, prescribed by Putin, Stalin is merely labeled a "controversial" figure. The ugly details of his brutal repression are not described. They are considered as necessary means "to modernize" the country. Highlighted, on the contrary, are his great deeds as *vozhhd* (leader) in the Great Patriotic War against Germany and his subsequent enlargement of the Soviet empire.

On February 1, 2011, however, there were modest signs of a new approach. On this date a working group of the Presidential Human Rights Council, presented in Yekaterinburg a report entitled "On the immortalization of the memory of the victims of the totalitarian regime and on national reconciliation."⁵⁸ In the report can be found a number of praiseworthy recommendations. These included the erection of monuments for the victims of Stalinist repression, the renaming of streets, juridical rehabilitation of the victims and giving them compensation or social assistance. One of the most important recommendations was to set up an online list with the names of the victims. However, this would require the opening of the archives of the FSB, the Ministry of the Interior, and the *Prokuratura*, the Public Prosecution Service. In an article in the government paper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* the chairman of the working group, Sergey Karaganov, remarked that in Russian government circles there was strong resistance to opening the archives. "In public opinion," he wrote, "exists the impression that the present government hides something, that it does not want to break with the terrorism of this [Stalin's] regime, that it considers its shameful secrets as its own."⁵⁹ The recommendations of the Presidential Human Rights Council still wait to be implemented. In the meantime there is a new president, Putin, who does not seem to consider it to be a priority.

According to Fyodor Lukyanov, editor of "Russia in Global Affairs," a leading strategic magazine, "the argument that Russia should follow the example of Germany by overcoming its past through repentance and reconciliation doesn't hold up. It was possible in Germany only because the country was effectively destroyed and occupied after World War II. Moreover, the process took many years to complete.

In contrast to Germany, Russia did not suffer a military defeat, was not occupied and did not feel at any time that it had been vanquished. It is impossible to force a feeling of guilt on people. Russia can fully come to terms with its past sins only through a long, extensive educational process, primarily in the area of history."⁶⁰ Lukyanov is certainly right that the historical situation of Russia in 1991 was different from that of Germany in 1945 and that, therefore, the process of coming to terms with its past in Russia will be more difficult. He is equally right to stress the importance of historical education. But what are the chances for such an education when not a democratic reform government is in place—as was the case in Germany after 1945—but a regime of former KGB Chekists who are proud to be the heirs of Stalin's NKVD? The perspective of a Russian equivalent of the German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is therefore bleak with all its negative consequences. A people that is not able to develop an open debate and critical reflection on its own past, especially when this past has been so bloody and repressive as in Soviet Russia, cannot develop any empathy for the suffering and legitimate demands for reparation of other peoples. The example of Weimar teaches us the dangers of such a situation. A people that has not come to terms with its recent past, but only has repressed it, is condemned to repeat its mistakes.

Assigning and refusing blame: Are there opposed moral settings?

According to Charles Tilly there is an important and fundamental difference between credit and blame: "Credit calls up a justification that associates giver and receiver in the same moral milieu, while blame separates two moral settings from each other."⁶¹ This juxtaposition of two different, and even opposed, moral settings became clear in another conflict, the row between Estonia and Moscow on the removal of a Soviet Red Army war memorial from the center of Tallinn in April 2007. For Russians this memorial was erected to commemorate the heroic Russian soldiers who risked their lives and died to fight fascism. For the Estonians it was a monument dedicated to their Stalinist occupants and oppressors. As Tilly rightly observed, "Every collective memory emerges from a contest among advocates of competing accounts concerning what happened and why. Every monument to the past advances some interpretations of its meaning and suppresses others. (...) Struggles over collective memory pivot on credit and blame."⁶² And he concluded, "When a sharp us—them boundary

separates blamer and blamed, the very actions for which A blames B are often actions for which B's supporters give B credit. That occurs most obviously in the case of war, where killing that looks barbarous to one side looks heroic to the other."⁶³

This does not necessarily mean that it is always prudent for a victim to press for a material reparation, as, for instance, the Latvian government planned to do. This is because such demands very often do not lead to reparations, but to a deepening of the us—they divide. Rather a *quid pro quo* could be envisaged in which the perpetrator acknowledges his guilt or responsibility and the victim, in return, does not ask for material reparations, but satisfies himself with this recognition which, eventually, can be accompanied by symbolic gestures. Such a procedure, along the lines of the different Truth Commissions set up elsewhere in the world in recent years, could lead to a genuine reconciliation. It is clear, however, that the Russian unwillingness to have a closer and critical look at its own past and its harsh reactions in response to demands of its former victims, only exacerbate and aggravate the tensions with its neighbors.

The Russian “commission to counteract attempts at falsifying history”

This unwillingness to have a critical look at Russia's own national past took a bizarre turn in a decision, taken on May 19, 2009, by President Medvedev, to set up a special commission “to counteract attempts at falsifying history to damage the interests of Russia.”⁶⁴ The task of this commission, which is led by the chief of staff of Medvedev's presidential administration, Sergey Naryshkin, is to counter “attempts of foreign states to falsify history, in particular post-Soviet countries' positions on World War II and the Stalinist repression. The most prominent cases have been Ukraine's attempts to have the Stalin-era Holodomor famine internationally recognized as an act of genocide by the Soviet Union, and Baltic countries' demands for compensation for the Soviet ‘occupation’.”⁶⁵ Already four years earlier, in May 2005, members of the State Duma adopted a resolution on “the inadmissibility of falsifying the results of WW II,”⁶⁶ in which Russian deputies claimed that appeals to Russia from the European Parliament to apologize for the occupation of the Baltic states were “hypocritical and cynical.” The fact that this resolution, finally, in 2009, led to the installation of a presidential commission is evidence, first, that international pressure on Russia is mounting, and second, that Russia does not show any sign of

repentance. On the contrary, any suggestion of a Russian responsibility is considered an undeserved attack.

One would expect that Medvedev's commission "against the falsification of history" (assuming for one moment that such a committee would have any sense), would be composed of the most eminent Russian (and—why not?—also non-Russian) historians specializing in the history of the twentieth century. But in the list of 28 members one finds only four historians: Vladimir Kozlov, the head of Rosarkhiv, the Russian archives; Alexander Chubarian, who is a twentieth-century specialist; N. Sakharov, a specialist in *medieval* Russian history, and—last but not least—a very *special* specialist: General Vasiliy Khristoforov, the head of the FSB (and former KGB) archives. The other 24 members of the commission are siloviki, ministry bureaucrats, and Duma members. They include the Chief of the General Staff, N. E. Makarov, and the Undersecretary of the Federal Security Council, V. A. Sobolev. This state commission of which the members are the appointed guardians of the "true version of history" reminds one of the Ministry of Truth in George Orwell's Soviet-inspired novel *1984* and one may ask oneself what actions Medvedev's thought police is going to undertake against offenders who criticize the official Kremlin version of "historical truth."

The Russian opposition politician Vladimir Ryzhkov has decrypted the real reasons behind this initiative. He wrote in a comment in the *Moscow Times*:

The siloviki have long dreamed of having a clause in the Criminal Code that would allow them to arrest and imprison critics of the regime for their ideas and statements. This is exactly what was done during Josef Stalin's rule. He created the 58th clause of the Criminal Code on "counterrevolutionary activity," which guaranteed that anyone found guilty of "agitation and propaganda" against the Soviet authorities would be sent straight to the gulag. Leonid Brezhnev continued this tradition during his 18 years in power. He created the 70th and 190th clauses of the Criminal Code concerning "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" and "slandorous fabrications that discredited the Soviet system." These clauses served as the formal basis to sentence Vladimir Bukovsky, Pyotr Grigorenko, Valeria Novodvorskaya, Zhores Medvedev, Andrei Amalrik and many others to years in confinement in psychiatric institutions. In the shadow of this harrowing legacy, Medvedev has created the commission on historical falsification. He paid particular attention to the problem of "revising the results of World War II." Federation Council Speaker

Sergei Mironov went even further, calling for criminal persecution for anyone repudiating the results of World War II." Mironov has targeted those who question the bravery of the Red Army and Soviet people during World War II. If this proposal becomes law, a Russian or foreigner who doubts the "genius" of Stalin as commander-in-chief during World War II or questions whether the people in the Warsaw Pact nations really "obtained their freedom" could be sent to prison for three to five years.⁶⁷

Ryzhkov—rightly—emphasizes the possible dire consequences that the installation of the new "truth commission" could have inside Russia. This initiative, aimed at establishing an official "historical orthodoxy," reminds one of the words of the French philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis: "If there is an orthodoxy, there is a dogma; if there is a dogma, there are guardians of the dogma: a church, a party. And if there are guardians of the dogma, there is Inquisition: KGB."⁶⁸ This is a fortiori the case here, where the KGB (FSB) is already present in the commission. The "truth commission" is also a two-edged sword: it is equally directed against foreigners, especially against those living in the countries of the post-Soviet space.⁶⁹ A "correct" interpretation of Russian history could also be used to mobilize the Russian and russo-phone minorities in the Baltic states and Ukraine against "falsifications" by their governments.

An example of "de-falsification": Poland's role in World War II

An example of how Russian officials think to counter-act the "falsification of history" was an article, written by colonel Sergey Kovalyov, the Head of the Institute of Military History of the Russian Ministry of Defense, which was published on the website of the ministry at the beginning of June 2009. The article was entitled: "Inventions and Falsifications in the Assessment of the Role of the USSR on the Eve and the Start of World War II," and it seemed to fit exactly into the new crusade against the "falsification of history" initiated by the Russian government. One of the key passages of the article was the statement that the Second World War "started with the refusal of Poland to satisfy German demands." These "extremely moderate demands" were, "to include the free city of Danzig in the Third Reich (and) permission for the construction of extra-territorial highways and a railroad, which would connect East Prussia with the rest of Germany."⁷⁰ This awkward attempt at

rewriting the history of the Second World War, trying to blame Poland for starting it, instead of Hitler and Stalin, led to an outcry in Poland and the spokesman of the Polish Foreign Ministry, Piotr Paszkowski, announced that the Russian ambassador in Warsaw would be asked to give an explanation.⁷¹ The article disappeared immediately from the Defense Ministry's website⁷² and a ministry official declared that the article "must not be considered the official point of view of the Defense Ministry." The article was "only for discussion."⁷³

A commentator of the Russian daily *Vremya Novostey*, Ivan Sukhov, himself a historian, wrote that not only had Kovalyov distorted the past, but that in Germany he would be liable to be prosecuted by the *Verfassungsschutz*, the body that protects the constitution. "That is not a reason for laughter," wrote Sukhov, "especially if one keeps in mind that (Russians) live in a country that has never assessed the crimes committed by bolshevism from a legal point of view."⁷⁴ In itself it was already a major development that this article could be published on the official website of the Russian Defense Ministry, but there is still a greater reason for concern that this kind of thinking seems to be common and widespread in Russian government circles. Demands for annexation of territories seem to be considered "normal" and the refusal to give in to these demands seems to be considered as a reason to blame the victim and not the aggressor for the ensuing war of aggression.

Establishing "historical truth" or fighting untruths?

Medvedev's commission acts from the premise that "historical truth" is something like a ready-made package that is the property of a government commission. As the Hungarian-American historian John Lukacs rightly observed, "Just as the purpose of medicine is not perfect health but the struggle against illness, just as the purpose of law is not perfect justice but the pursuit of it through the vigilance against injustice, *the purpose of the historian is not the establishment of perfect truth but the pursuit of truth through a reduction of ignorance, including untruths.*"⁷⁵ Another historian, David R. Stone, made the following comment on the installation of Medvedev's commission: "Medvedev most notably says not a word about what exact falsifications of history he's objecting to." And he gives him the following hint: "The holy-of-holies of Russian archives is the 'Presidential Archive'. If Medvedev doesn't like what historians say, he could throw open the archives tomorrow. If he doesn't want to open those archives because of what might come to light, then we're no longer talking about falsifiers."⁷⁶ Stone is right: a little bit old-fashioned,

Gorbachev-era *glasnost* could do no harm. This is especially true for the archives of the FSB, the follow-up organization of the KGB, the head of which, general Vasiliy Khristoforov, is a member of the aforementioned commission. Without any doubt, free access to these archives could shed new light on many unknown activities of the Soviet secret services. Unfortunately, until now it is Khristoforov and his team who decide which files will be opened. External researchers have no direct access to the archives, but are offered copies of materials that have been carefully selected by Khristoforov's FSB team.

Of course, other recommendations could also be made, such as, for instance, to follow some recent examples of promising attempts to reduce historical ignorance and to combat one-sided untruths. One example is the Franco-German project for a common history book to be used in secondary schools in both countries.⁷⁷ This project has been followed-up with a plan for a common German-Polish history book, which would be introduced in Germany and Poland around 2011.⁷⁸ *Bi-national* commissions are better equipped and prepared to eliminate one-sided untruths and prejudices concerning the historical relations of two countries because they practice the rule of "let us hear the other side". Listening to the arguments of the other side can shed new light on events and lead to a mutual re-evaluation of one's views. Such an approach, however, seems only possible when nationalist and chauvinist ideas and sentiments are already receding. This is clearly not the case in present-day Russia where each day nationalist and chauvinist feelings only seem to become stronger.

One could ask what is behind this stubborn Russian self-righteousness, this refusal to face the ugly side of their national history, this reticence to accept even the most minimal responsibility for crimes committed in their name. Is it still the Soviet legacy that plays a role here? Is it legacy of a vulgar Marxist interpretation of history, in which the end (the classless society; the victory of the "progressive forces") justified the means, however morally questionable these means were? Or is it the supposed historical determinism of this vulgar Marxism which tends to exclude the notion of personal responsibility, because an individual can do nothing against history's necessity? Or, maybe, is it just an *a-moral* view of history of which Isaiah Berlin said: "We are told that it is foolish to judge Charlemagne or Napoleon or Genghis Khan or Hitler or Stalin for their massacres (...), or at least that to do so is not our business as historians: because as historians our categories are 'neutral.'"⁷⁹

Maybe this Marxist legacy plays a role. But there is still another, second, legacy that possibly explains the Russian inability to come

to terms with its past. This is Russia's *colonial* legacy. Russia is the last European colonial empire that has passed through a process of decolonization. But—unlike the other European colonial powers—it has never really accepted the loss of its empire. It still treats its former colonies with the paternalism of the former colonial power. Behind this paternalism hides a scarcely concealed contempt for the populations and democratically elected governments of the newly independent countries. This contempt of the Russian ruling class, however, is not restricted to the newly independent states and their governments, but also directed against its own, Russian, population, who has equally been a victim of the Stalinist crimes. The backbone and crucial "facilitator" of that criminal regime was the KGB and its predecessors (respectively the Cheka, GPU, OGPU, NKVD, NKGB, and the MGB). This same organization, under its present name FSB, has become the hard core of the ruling elite.⁸⁰ The KGB was very different from Western intelligence services, because it maintained an immense repressive system inside the country without which the Soviet Union would not have survived for almost 75 years. For the ruling elite, coming mainly from the former KGB and its successor organizations, to repent the crimes of the Soviet past would imply to repent the crimes of their own KGB past. As long as former KGB agents stay in power we cannot expect that the Russian leadership and the Russian population will come to terms with its past and that any real Russian equivalent of the post-Second World War German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* will take place in Russia.⁸¹

4

Post-Imperial Pain and the Making of a New National Myth

The “Weimar Parallel”: Socio-Psychological Aspects (Continued)

Post-imperial pain: Anger, pessimism, and mystical expectations of a great future

Another parallel between Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia is the experience of post-imperial pain. In Russia, even more than in Weimar Germany, the loss of territories took place in a post-imperial context. Living in a country that suddenly has lost large parts of its territory, generates feelings of malaise, anger, and frustration in its inhabitants. According to David Landes, “when one’s country becomes smaller, one’s self becomes smaller. When one has known and enjoyed the greatness of Great Britain, ebb tide is hard to take.”¹ What Landes wrote about the feelings of the British people after the loss of empire is, of course, equally true for the Russians after the demise of the Soviet Union. This frustration will still be exacerbated if the territorial losses are accompanied by negative consequences for people’s personal lives. And this was both the case in Weimar Germany and in post-Soviet Russia. Weimar Germany was first confronted with hyperinflation and some years later with an economic breakdown in the wake of the world economic crisis. In post-Soviet Russia, there was an immediate steep fall in GDP. The emergence of new national borders led to problems in railroad connections and transport systems. Trade relations were interrupted and the state bureaucracy could not cope with the institutional chaos. Salaries and pensions were not paid, and so on, not to mention the thousands of victims of local civil wars in the post-Soviet space. It will be difficult for the population of a former imperial state to accept the new situation, especially when the loss of empire is sudden and unexpected.² Both in Weimar Germany and in post-Soviet Russia feelings of revanchism emerged. People tend to indulge in romantic memories of the greatness and the glory of the past

and in dreams of restoring this lost greatness. Revanchist feelings are not necessarily only the prerogative of political extremists. Even moderate politicians can succumb to them. It is telling, for instance, that Gustav Stresemann, the longest-serving Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic,³ who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1926 together with French Prime Minister Aristide Briand for his reconciliation efforts between France and Germany, did *not* recognize the Eastern frontier with Poland and thereby prepared the ground for the more radical and aggressive revisionists who would come after him. Equally, post-Soviet Russia has long hesitated before definitively recognizing the frontiers with its new neighbors.

Psychologists have described the way in which people react to losses or dramas in their personal lives. Confronted with losses or disasters, people's reactions pass through different phases. The first phase is a state of shock. Normally this is followed by a period of denial. When denial can no longer be maintained and reality has to be faced, the next stage is anger that can go in all directions, seeking for scapegoats. When anger does not change the situation, it turns into depression. And finally, when one adapts oneself and comes to terms with the new situation, depression can make way for acceptance.⁴ To reach a state of acceptance depends on the national and international context. Britain, for instance, displayed a much more flexible attitude vis-à-vis the loss of its empire than France where the colonial war in Algeria led to a coup d'état and to terrorist attacks by the OAS. In post Second-World War Germany and Japan, the new situation was imposed by the occupying powers, which made it easier for the populations to accept what had become inevitable. This forced acceptance was then gradually internalized, due to the fact that democracy began to take root in both countries and the role of the military had been strongly reduced. In the immediate aftermath of the loss of empire, apocalyptic visions about the future often emerge in the colonial metropolis. The French and the Dutch predicted that a loss of the colonies would lead to a national disaster. In reality, the loss of empire in France, Britain, as well as in the Netherlands, was accompanied by one of the most sustained economic booms in modern history, which made the acceptance of the decolonization process easier.⁵ In Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia, however, a quite different reaction pattern to the territorial losses developed. After the first shock and a phase of denial, a third phase of permanent anger seemed to have entrenched itself.⁶ In Russia the loss of the two Slavic countries, Ukraine and Belarus, (and, to a minor extent, Kazakhstan), was considered unacceptable, due to the long-established historical links between Moscow and these countries.

Dreams of the past: The dangerous nostalgia

Memories of the imperial past led to feelings of nostalgia in both Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia. This nostalgia was coupled with a negative assessment of the present. "Just when 'nostalgia' (...) came to refer to a sentimental view of the past," wrote Christopher Lasch, "is difficult to determine, but the new and broader usage was firmly established by the 1920s."⁷ And he added, "For those who lived through the cataclysm of the First World War, disillusionment was a collective experience—not just a function of the passage from youth to adulthood but of historical events that made the prewar world appear innocent and remote. For the first time, a whole period of historical time began to take on the qualities formerly associated with childhood. Since those who experienced war most directly as soldiers, ambulance drivers, and military prisoners were literally children before the war, it was natural for them to play off postwar disillusionment against idyllic images of prewar childhood."⁸ This nostalgia had nothing to do with a real memory of the past, because, "strictly speaking, nostalgia does not entail the exercise of memory at all, since the past it idealizes stands outside time, frozen in unchanging perfection. Memory too may idealize the past, but not in order to condemn the present."⁹

What was true of Weimar Germany was equally true of post-Soviet Russia. In both historical situations feelings of pessimism and disorientation prevailed. These feelings, in turn, led the population to seek compensation in mystical and unrealistic dreams of a great and splendid future. The code words of this phenomenon are irrationalism, mysticism, exaltation, and an undue emphasis on "true" feelings versus "untrue" rational thinking. According to Helmuth Plessner the new German Reich, built by Bismarck, was "a great power without a state idea."¹⁰ In pre-First World War Germany "the state and the civil-economic society had from the start different meanings. Society acknowledged the national state as the necessary power organization for economic and cultural progress. (...) (But) it stood not for one of the great human ideas, such as freedom, civilization and democracy, it did not legitimate itself by these, it wanted for itself just a place in the sun."¹¹ This lack of overarching universal values became clear during the First World War. Imperial Germany fought the war for its national interests. What was at stake was—in the words of Kaiser Wilhelm: "to have a place in the sun." The United States of President Wilson and its Allies, on the other hand, fought under the banner of high ideals. For them the goal for which they fought was no less than "to make the world safe for

democracy”—an ideological legitimacy that transcended the realm of narrow national interests.¹²

During Weimar this lack of a more universalist ideology persisted, despite the fact that Germany got the most democratic constitution of its history. This new, democratic constitution was considered by a heteroclitite majority—which included the old aristocratic elite, right-wing nationalists, left-wing communists, and even a large part of the middle class—as an alien element that did not fit into Germany's “organic” political tradition. This ideological uncertainty led to an intensive search for new ideas and new goals. According to Detlev Peukert, during the Weimar period, “there was a widespread search for new foundations and new values, a hunger for strong feelings and grand objectives. The search took several different forms of political expression: authoritarian conceptions of an autocratic state administered by experts; left-wing visions of class dictatorship; a longing for a ‘Volksgemeinschaft’. And another important political by-product was the sort of racist utopia that played a central role in National Socialist ideology.”¹³ This eclectic search for more stable ideological foundations by a population that had lost its moral anchor led to the relativization of values and even to an amoral view of life. An example of the latter was the anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi writer Ernst Jünger, who described the feelings of alienation of his generation in terms of “a fog that lies within us,” “one (...) notices how little one is at home in oneself.”¹⁴ Jünger showed himself totally indifferent for the goals and values for which the war had been fought. “Essential is,” he wrote, “not *what* we are fighting for, but *how* we fight. (...) The warriors’ spirit, the exposure of oneself to risk, even for the tiniest idea, weighs more heavily in the scale than all the brooding about good and evil.”¹⁵

The same pessimism and value relativism one could find in Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. This voluminous book of 1,200 pages, written before the war, but published in 1918, became a national bestseller. In his book Spengler described eight civilizations, each of which, in a time span of about 1,000 years, passed through cycles of emergence, growth and decline. According to him, in the nineteenth century, Western civilization had entered the phase of a definitive downward spiral. “The title,” he wrote in the preface, “refers to (...) a world historical phase of several centuries, at the beginning of which we stand today.”¹⁶ Spengler's theory was highly speculative. It was more an inventive construction than based on serious historical research. Walter Laqueur called it “a guide for confused people.”¹⁷ Thomas Mann regretted its “Satanic claw” and “human hate.”¹⁸ And Eric Weitz wrote

that “it reads like the work of an erudite crank, perhaps even a idiot savant.”¹⁹ But even Weitz had to admit: “yet *The Decline of the West* clearly captured something of the mood in Germany and beyond after World War I. Its prevailing pessimistic tone coupled with grandiose visions of rebirth and revival; the mix of psychology and history; and its expansive ambition (...) to predict the future as well—resonated with the sense of despair and the longings that many Germans felt.”²⁰

From gloom to inflated visions of the future

One would have expected that this psychological climate of gloom and pessimism would have led to a more moderate and realist assessment of Germany's possibilities. Germany was, after all, a *defeated* nation. But instead it led to inflated and unrealistic visions. It was as if one wanted to jump over one's own shadow. Grandiose visions were not only popularized by Spengler, who looked forward to a political dictatorship to stop the downward spiral that had its origin in “the dictatorship of the money and its political weapon, democracy,”²¹ but by many other authors as well. Arthur Moeller van den Bruck published a book in 1923 with the title *The Third Reich* (from his book the Nazis would lend the name for the Nazi empire) in which he announced the coming of a third German empire. Van den Bruck gave a special twist to Spengler's theory of decline by emphasizing the difference between “old” nations, like France and Britain, that were on the brink of decline and “young” nations, such as America, Russia and Germany, which only had started their ascent. Characteristic for most of these grandiose visions was that they did not embrace democratic ideals, nor formulated the enhancement of personal freedom or the realization of liberal values as the ultimate goal. On the contrary, these visions were totally Hobbesian. They turned around power and the accumulation of power. Power was not only considered to be more important than political freedom and civil rights, but it became the incarnation of what was just and right. This vision was not only presented by Carl Schmitt, but equally by Spengler, who wrote—not as a neutral observation, but approvingly: “World history is the world court of justice: she has always justified the stronger, fuller life (...) she has always sacrificed truth and justice to power.”²² This emphasis on power as the supreme value led to a bellicose view of international relations. Heraclitus' famous dictum, “War is the father of all things” was taken at face value. If power is the ultimate factor that counts in international relations, it is only logical that war is the defining characteristic of these relations. Spengler wrote that

"war is the creator of all great things."²³ Carl Schmitt, the leading legal theorist of the Nazi period, held the same view.

These grandiose visions not only glorified power and war. Additionally they contained a third element: the necessity of a leader, a Führer. Spengler did not yet describe in detail the personality of the future dictator, but Wilhelm Stapel, a prolific Protestant (and anti-Semitic) author in this period, predicted in his book *The Christian Statesman* (1932), that the new Führer would be both hard and paternal and have charismatic power. He would be a leader, a warrior and a priest all in one. This leader cult was a reason for Walter Laqueur to ask: "But what if this Führer would not fulfil such high qualifications? This question seems not to have come up in the mind of the ideologues of the Right. (...) Exactly because the rightwing thinkers had a sceptical view of human nature, it is astonishing that no one thought about the possibility that the long awaited Führer could reveal himself to be a demagogue, a charlatan, (and) maybe, even a criminal. Had he once come into power, who would be capable to stop him?"²⁴

The end of communism and Russia's search for a new national myth

Weimar's predecessor: imperial, Wilhelminian Germany, lacked a universalist ideological mission. Things were different, however, with Russia's predecessor: the Soviet Union that was the global herald of a messianic ideology. Millions of people, worldwide, looked up to it with veneration, as the model of a new society. The Soviet Union was not a normal country, not even a normal empire, it was a beacon for mankind and this universal vocation found an expression, first, in the Comintern, and then, in the Cominform, the international communist organizations of which it was the uncontested natural leader. Even in the last decades before its demise, when its aura started to fade, its messianism never completely disappeared. With the sudden end of communism, therefore, Russia not only lost an empire and a specific form of political and economic organization, it lost also its myth: the myth of its humanitarian vocation, its vanguard role in the liberation of mankind from the chains of oppressive capitalism. The role of a global ideological leader seemed definitively to have been taken over by the United States. Was not the end of the Cold War, in the words of Francis Fukuyama, "the unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism?"²⁵ Fukuyama considered this "triumph of the Western idea" even a kind of Hegelian synthesis of world history: "the universalization of Western

liberal democracy as the final form of human government." From now on, it seemed, Russia could only—hesitatingly and slowly—follow the ideological lead of the US. Instead of being a beacon and an independent source of inspiration, Russia had become—not only in the eyes of foreigners, but in the eyes of its own population as well—the heir of a false ideology that had wrecked the country. The end of communism brought political instability, economic upheaval and the break-up of empire. No longer a beacon of hope for the oppressed, a climate of pessimism and deep gloom settled on the country.

Grandiose imperialist visions: The world according to Igor Panarin

This climate of gloom and pessimism did not prevent the emergence of grandiose visions. On the contrary, like in Weimar Germany, gloom and doom were rather the conditions of the emergence of these grandiose visions. In post-Soviet Russia—like in Weimar—there was never a real acceptance of the new situation, nor an adaptation of the popular psyche to the new status of post-colonial power. In Russia, as in Weimar Germany, imperialist dreams of a grandiose future remained more lively than ever. One of the leading thinkers in this nationalist revival is Igor Panarin, a former KGB analyst and former secretary of Roskosmos, the Russian Federal Space Agency. Igor Panarin is not an obscure publicist, but a leading figure in the Russian Foreign Ministry, where he is Dean of the Diplomatic Academy. Generations of Russian diplomats have participated in seminars organized by Panarin and his staff. Panarin, in a sense, is the *eminence grise*, and maybe even the "secret ideologist" of the Foreign Ministry. One might expect that, as a dean of the Diplomatic Academy, he would have a "diplomatic," moderate view of international relations and of Russia's role in the world. However, the contrary is the case. Panarin is a well-known maverick, who is contacted by the media worldwide to air his unusual and provocative ideas.

In an interview he gave to *Izvestia* in April 2009 he explained his geopolitical ideas. He predicted the emergence of a powerful "Eurasian Union," led by Russian Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin. This union, modeled on the EU, would have a single currency and a parliament in Saint Petersburg. It would not only reconstitute the Soviet Union, but also the tsarist empire and stretch as far as the Bering Straits. Panarin predicted that Alaska will return to Russia. Russia would equally play a dominating role in Iran and in the Indian subcontinent. In the end both China and the European Union would become members of this

"Eurasian Union." They would be part of a triumvirate that would dominate the world. Eastern Europe would return to Russia's sphere of interest. In this broad picture, the reader might miss one important element, the United States. Panarin's view of the future of the United States is rather bleak. In a display of wishful thinking, Panarin projects the history of the demise of the Soviet Union on the global superpower. Not only will Alaska be restored to Russia, but also the remaining United States will fall apart. He had already made this prediction in 1998 at a conference on the information war in the Austrian town of Linz.²⁷ According to this vision, California would become a Chinese colony, Texas would return to Mexico, and the East Coast would become a part of the European Union. Panarin's prediction should already have materialized in 2010. The financial and economic crisis of 2008–2009 was considered by Panarin an event that confirmed his predictions (unfortunately he ignored the fact that Russia was more severely hit than the US).

Panarin's clairvoyance does not stop here. He equally predicted that Putin will become the *gosudar* of this newly emerging Eurasian Union. 'Gosudar' is a strange title for a politician in the twenty-first century, even for Russians. In Russian it means "ruler," "sovereign," but also "prince" or "monarch." Panarin explains that he has taken the title from Machiavelli's book *The Prince*. In the article in *Izvestia* one can see a photomontage of Putin, dressed in the long ceremonial ermine mantle of a Russian tsar, a big cross on his chest, with a scepter in each hand as the symbols of his supreme power. This is the world according to Igor Panarin. This is not entirely madness. Taking into account that Panarin has direct access to Putin, we have to assume that his theories have a real impact, especially his ideas on the Eurasian Union and the future role of Putin. It is not evident that Panarin himself believes his predictions on the disintegration of the United States. He is a known expert on information warfare and psychological warfare and these kinds of predictions could have been made intentionally with the purpose of destabilizing the opponent. At the same time it must be emphasized that his predictions are serious. We should not forget that even Western authors, such as the French anthropologist Emmanuel Todd made similar predictions some years ago.²⁸

Aleksandr Dugin's Russian fascism

Grandiose imperialist visions can also be found in the publications of Aleksandr Dugin, an expert in occultist theories and a self-proclaimed

fascist, who has recently acquired a certain reputation as a geopolitician and theorist of Eurasianism. Like Panarin, Dugin wants a reconstitution of the Soviet empire. He reminds his readers that “the battle for the integration of the post-Soviet space is a battle for Kiev.”²⁹ “Dugin wants Ukraine to return to Russia’s fold,” wrote Marlène Laruelle, “and to rearrange its territory in accordance with what he calls the ethnocultural facts, that is, a division between the West and East of Ukraine.”³⁰ But Dugin’s aspirations do not stop at an aggressive reconquest of the former Soviet republics, including the Baltic states. He equally wants to bring the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (except the German Democratic Republic that is part of a reunified Germany) back under the Russian aegis and create a Eurasian empire. “His Eurasia must even expand beyond Soviet space, for he proposes incorporating Manchuria, Xinjiang, Tibet, and Mongolia, as well as the Orthodox world of the Balkans; Eurasia would only reach its limits with ‘geopolitical expansion right up to the shores of the Indian Ocean,’ an idea that was taken up by and popularized by Zhirinovskiy.”³¹ The peoples of this Eurasian empire will have cultural autonomy, but not sovereignty. Dugin follows the Nazi ideologue Carl Schmitt by substituting peoples as the subjects of international law for the states. Because the leading people of the reconstituted Eurasian empire is the Russian people, the carrier of the “collective imperial sovereignty” (*kollektivnyi imperskiy suverenitet*) will be the Russian people. Like Panarin, Dugin refers to Putin as the best choice to head this Eurasian empire. He would be “a Eurasianist president of the people, who stands above the parties.”³² In Dugin’s vision, Putin will not become a *gosudar* or a prince, as Panarin proposes. He remains “just” a—very powerful—president.

Aleksandr Dugin does not conceal that he is a fully-fledged fascist. In his book *Konservativnaya Revolyutsiya* (The Conservative Revolution)³³ of 1994 he praised “The Third Way,” which was “not left and not right.” This Third Way was incarnate in “Italian fascism in its early period and also in the time when the Italian Social Republic [Mussolini’s mini-fascist state under German supervision] existed in Northern Italy.” But even better was “German National-Socialism,” he wrote, because “[this] was a more complete and total (although we have to admit that it was not the most orthodox) realization of the Third Way.” Equally in his book *Tampliery Proletariata* (The Templars of the Proletariat) of 1997, which was meant as the platform of a political party with the same name, Aleksandr Dugin openly praised fascism.³⁴ According to him, there were three ideologies in the twentieth century: liberalism, communism, and fascism, of which Russia had realized

"two ideological stages—a communist and a liberal [stage]. There still remains fascism." "Fascism," wrote Dugin, "is nationalism, but not nationalism whatsoever, but a revolutionary, rebellious, romantic, idealistic [nationalism] that appeals to a great myth and a transcendental idea, trying to realize the Impossible Dream, to realize the society of the hero and the *Übermensch*, to change and reform the world." Unfortunately, he said, "in history the pure, idealistic fascism did not get the incarnation it deserved," because it was necessary for "Mussolini, as well as for Hitler, Franco, and Salazar, to make alliances with conservatives, national-capitalists, great proprietors, and big concerns. But this compromise always ended badly for the fascist regimes." The kind of fascism Dugin wants to realize in Russia is called by him "Russian national socialism." Approvingly he quotes the French fascist author Robert Brasillach, who said: "I see, just as in the West, fascism emerging in Russia, a red and boundless fascism." Dugin concluded: "Indeed, no pale, brown-pink national capitalism, but the glaring dawn of a new Russian Revolution, fascism, boundless as our lands, and red as our blood."³⁵ In the last decade, however, parallel with his political ascent, Dugin has become more cautious and puts less emphasis on his fascist ideas. Instead he concentrated more on his geopolitical, Eurasian, ideas and founded the Eurasian Movement. However, his grandiose ideas of a great Eurasian empire, dominated by Russia, are an integral part of his fascist ideology.³⁶

The imperialist dreams of Vladimir Zhirinovsky

Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party in the Russian Duma, has published his ideas in his book *Poslednyi brosok na yug* (Last Push to the South).³⁷ Also this book is a pure specimen of a fascist ideology. Zhirinovsky develops in it a geostrategic theory that is a worthy competitor of Hitler's *Lebensraum* philosophy. Where Hitler planned a future expansion of Germany into Russia, Zhirinovsky heads south: Russia should not only reconquer the lost territories of the former Soviet empire and the former tsarist empire (including parts of Poland and Finland), but it should also claim Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan as its exclusive sphere of influence.³⁸ That his project goes further than just establishing a "sphere of influence" becomes clear when he writes: "Russia gets a frontier with India."³⁹ This Russian expansion is necessary, according to Zhirinovsky, "in order to eliminate once and for all the danger at the southern frontiers of the Fatherland and help the neighboring peoples of Russia to lead a quiet life."⁴⁰ He develops a new

variant of Carl Schmitt's theory of international law. Like Schmitt, he denies the right of the (smaller) nations to self-determination and only recognizes their right to keep their own culture, language and religion. Smaller nations, accordingly, will be ordered in *Großräume* (great spaces) under the hegemony of a great power. Zhirinovsky divides the world in four of such great spaces: Apart from Russia as the leader of Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iran, he mentions China and Japan as the leaders of South-East Asia, the Philippines, Australia, and Indonesia; Western Europe as the leader of West Africa; and the United States as the leader of Latin America.⁴¹ As concerns Europe, Zhirinovsky plays the role of a generous geopolitical Santa Claus: Germany gets the green light to push back the Poles; Romania could get a part of Moldova, and Hungary a piece of Romania. All this "should not lead to wars."

Zhirinovsky has often be depicted as a political clown, a provocateur, someone who should not be taken too seriously and even as someone who does not believe himself in his grandiose, bellicose ideas. However, this is a misleading interpretation, because Zhirinovsky may be less at home in the fascist classics than Aleksandr Dugin, but he is no less a fully-fledged fascist and all the ingredients of a fascist ideology are present in his book. We find, for instance, ideas of a national rebirth that are characteristic of fascist ideologies. He wants "A New Russia" (*Novaya Rossiya*),⁴² "in which again the famous traditions of its army will be realized, again talented Russian industrial engineers create models of the newest technologies."⁴³ This 'New Russia' is militarized to such a degree that "she will have the strongest army in the world."⁴⁴ Russians can indulge in ultranationalist feelings, when they "look with pride at the national flag of their country and listen with a beating heart to the national hymn."⁴⁵ In the European part of this New Russia, there is no place for foreign minorities, especially migrants from the South. According to Zhirinovsky, "it is necessary to fight the migrant workers from the South in the European centers of Russia."⁴⁶ Like Hitler, who compared Jews with *Ungeziefer* (vermin) that should be crushed, Zhirinovsky calls the Southerners "cockroaches" (*tarakany*).⁴⁷ His racism against colored peoples also emerges in his description of the United States. As a consequence of the influx of Latinos and the demographic growth of the black population, he writes, "half America will become colored," which means, "that we will see in America a further growth of crime, the ruin of the white population and at the same time a multiplication of the colored population."⁴⁸ "Who knows," writes Zhirinovsky "will America around the middle of the twenty-first century ask for help from Russia?"⁴⁹ Finally, like Hitler, he speaks a language that glorifies

violence, considering it a purifying act. "Now we are in a bath," he wrote. "And we wash this crusty skin, this dirt that accumulated during the whole twentieth century. Sometimes this leads to bloodletting."⁵⁰ The only ideological deviation vis-à-vis the classical fascist ideology Zhirinovsky permits himself is his defense of a multi-party parliament. However, this seems less a question of principle, as of political opportunism, because his book was published just before the Duma elections of December 1993 in which he was participating with his party.

As in the case of Dugin, Zhirinovsky's ideas are without any doubt the expression of a fully-fledged fascist ideology. It is also instructive to have a look at his allies. Zhirinovsky has established close relations with the neo-fascist *Deutsche Volksunion* (DVU) of Gerhard Frey in Germany and with Le Pen's National Front in France.⁵¹ In his book, he boasted his close relationship with Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein, whose regime can be qualified as a modern Arab variant of fascism.⁵² Because Zhirinovsky, like Dugin, was eager to conquer a place in the political establishment, he was willing to downplay his most extreme ideas. While one could observe in the years 1990–1993, this is before his election in the Duma, an ideological radicalization, one could see a more pragmatic approach after he entered the Duma and became its deputy speaker. In the Duma he led a constructive opposition, supported most of Yeltsin's market reforms, and did no longer refer to a "third World War between Russia and the South." His foreign policy doctrine changed from a "revolutionary" into a more "restorationist expansionism."⁵³ This constructive attitude was further strengthened under Putin's presidency. Does this mean that in the case of Zhirinovsky pragmatism has got the upper hand over ideology? We may doubt it. Andreas Umland made the following observation on Zhirinovsky's more "moderate" stance: "As long as a loud propaganda of aggressive ideas does not seem to be wished by the Kremlin, convinced fascists, wanting to express their political views in a loud way, will do so only in a small circle. Clearly, this is what is happening, not taking into account the fact that sometimes the essence of the rhetoric of these ultranationalists did not differ in a fundamental way from Putin's internal and foreign policy (as, for instance, in relation to Chechnya or the 'reforms' of the federal system), but is only a radical version of these."⁵⁴

Anonymous Russian monarchists: Tsar Putin?

In 2008 a book was published by a small, unknown publishing house in Paris entitled *Projet: Russie*.⁵⁵ It was the translation of *Proekt Rossiya*,

published in Moscow the year before. This voluminous book of 380 pages was written by anonymous Russian authors. These anonymous authors attacked democracy, advocated the re-establishment of the Russian empire, and called for a strong and permanent leader. They did not hide their great admiration for Joseph Stalin and spoke out in favor of the reintroduction of a divine right, and looked everywhere for conspiracies. Their open *contempt* for the Russian people was striking. As far as they were concerned, the Russian people was not the sovereign body of free and independent citizens, but a collection of “children” who should be addressed in “a children’s language.” “Ordinary people see only the small details,” wrote the authors, “they transform themselves in worms [sic!] (...) and take refuge in the sole pleasures of the body.”⁵⁶ They are, therefore, very different from the elite. This is because the elite not only has a superior intelligence, but is also “capable of having a vision that encompasses centuries, continents, (and) civilizations.”⁵⁷

The underlying value system of the authors is immediately clear: they are not inspired by a liberal egalitarianism, but by an uncompromising elitism. They refer respectfully to the French ultra-conservative philosopher Joseph de Maistre, who was a fierce critic of the democratic principles of the French Revolution. Democracy for them is not the solution. “Democratic elections,” they wrote, are “a formidable weapon, the most sure instrument to weaken and destroy a country.”⁵⁸ The authors warn their compatriots: “The Russians continue to hope, as if it is a question of only to become mature to know a ‘real’ democracy, with ‘real’ elections and all the rest. They still haven’t grasped that this is a utopia that is even more illusionary than the communist dream. Democracy (...) does not exist in any country of the world.”⁵⁹ The authors even criticize the communist party of the former Soviet Union for its—in their eyes—overzealous efforts to maintain a democratic façade. “The communist party,” they write, “would have stayed in power for a longer time if it had said the truth, which was that the elections were not real, that they were a ritual of which the goal was to show the unity of the party and the people.”⁶⁰ Interestingly, the suggestion of the authors to consider an election not an election, nor a plebiscite, but only a *ritual*, meant to express the unity of the leadership and the people, is exactly a description of the “German democracy” after Hitler’s rise to power in 1933.⁶¹

If democracy is not the solution, what is the kind of government Russia needs? According to the authors, “a country as huge as Russia does not need a temporary ruler, but a master, not a dictator, but a father.”⁶² Examples of admired father figures include “Lenin, Stalin, or

De Gaulle." But the ultimate father figure is a tsar, because "the tsar has a concern for the interest of the country, not for his personal interest."⁶³ The tsar "is a Father whom one can address in a human way and whom one can love, the people will have a defender. This 'Father' will know that he is responsible for the country before God and not before the electorate."⁶⁴ By making the tsar "responsible before God" the authors want to restore a divine right and abolish any evidence of popular sovereignty. But this is not all. They also want to give the monarch absolute power: "Only the head is authorized to act according to the situation, ignoring, if the circumstances demand it, the letter of the law."⁶⁵ Such an absolutist power which can circumvent existing law is reminiscent of Stalin's autocratic rule or Hitler's use of *Führererlässe* (Führer decrees) that had priority over existing laws.

For the authors, it is not necessary to seek the new tsar from the Romanov dynasty. He could be elected—of course not by the people, but by a small elite—and subsequently crowned by the Orthodox Church, in the same way as the first Romanov was elected in 1613 by the *zemskiy sobor*, consisting of representatives of the nobility, the clergy and the merchant class. They suggest no name, but Putin would certainly be a good candidate. The similarity between this project and Igor Panarin's proposal to make Putin a *gosudar* is striking. In a kind of Hegelian dialectic the pre-1917 and post-1917 forms of leadership are combined to produce the ideal Russian leader for the twenty-first century, who is a mixture of Stalin and the tsar. Interestingly, in his autobiographic portrait *First Person* even Putin does not exclude a restoration of the monarchy. Asked if Russia should restore the monarchy, Putin answered: "I think that is not very likely. But in general (...) in certain periods of time (...) in a certain place (...) under certain conditions (...) monarchy has played and continues to this day to play a positive role. (...) The monarch doesn't have to worry about whether or not he will be elected, or about petty political interests, or about how to influence the electorate. He can think about the destiny of the people and not become distracted with trivialities."⁶⁶ When the interviewers said: "But in Russia, that's not possible," Putin reacted: "You know, there's a lot that seems impossible and incredible and then—*bang!* Look what happened to the Soviet Union. Who could have imagined that it would simply collapse? No one saw that coming—even in their worst nightmares."⁶⁷ When the authors of *Project Russia* spoke out in favor of a new tsar, a project that even Putin does not disregard, the question is: what for? Why does Russia need a Father-Dictator who can rule the country with absolute power, unrestricted by the law?

The answer—again—is *empire* because this is the *raison d'être* of the whole project. Democratic governments are not considered stable and permanent enough to satisfy the grandiose and imperialist ambitions of the authors. Only an autocratic Orthodox tsar can bring the required stability and permanence. On the foundation of Orthodox Christianity, they write, it is “possible to fully reestablish the empire in Russia.”⁶⁸ And re-establishing the Russian empire is not only a blessing for Russia, but a blessing for the whole world, because—and the authors write this without the slightest hint of irony: “No empire, not in the past, nor today, can compare itself with Russia in the field of tolerance.”⁶⁹ And they continue: “Russians do not consider themselves better than whosoever. Russia has welcomed and continues to welcome other peoples (...) on the basis of a family reunion. (...) Russia is a special empire, a unique and unequalled empire, an empire of a family type.”⁷⁰ The authors do not feel any inhibition mentioning Georgia in the context of the Russian “family type empire,” quoting the Russian writer Lermontov who wrote about Georgia: “She flourished (...) Without fearing the enemies beyond the friendly bayonets.” And the authors conclude: “The Russian bayonets did not ransack, they defended.”⁷¹ In their opinion: “Russia represents a ‘danger’ especially by its capacity to unite the most different peoples and cultures (...). Russia could unite around itself the whole world, while China, India or whatever country of Europe and America would not be capable of this.”⁷² In a second book, published in Moscow in 2007, the authors repeat these grandiose dreams: “We are absolutely sure that our Fatherland will again become the most powerful government of the planet. There is God, there are the resources, there are the people. Everything is there.”⁷³ Doubt is excluded: “My russkie! S nami Bog!” [We are Russians! God is with us!].⁷⁴

These grandiose imperialist dreams are not complete without their complement: a conspiracy theory. The enemy is the United States, which is accused of having organized the revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, using “technologies that permit to topple a regime in all legality and without recourse to force.”⁷⁵ “Nobody needs to be convinced of the incredible efficiency of these new technologies. The ‘velvet revolutions’ have caused more noise and chaos all over the world than the explosions of Hiroshima and Nagasaki taken together.”⁷⁶ Russia is especially targeted, because as “a global power of which the territory, resources and the people are exceptional, it represents, by its mere existence, an obstacle to the instauration of a global hegemony.”⁷⁷ The authors declare that “one has tried more than once to dismember” Russia. American promotion of democracy and the destabilization and

disintegration of Russia go, therefore, hand in hand. "In such a context huge Russia would disintegrate into a multitude of mini-states."⁷⁸

In reality, great uncertainty and deep *angst* are concealed behind these excessive narcissistic and imperialist dreams which are so grandiose and unlimited that the authors even do not hesitate to write that Russia "could unite the whole world around itself". The greatest fear is the authors' fear of their own people, the ordinary Russian citizens, who could press for democratic changes. The authors do not hide their hostility and deep contempt for these ordinary citizens. They declare the death of "the mass political party." "Today," they wrote, "the political party as a form of action is obsolete, something new is needed."⁷⁹ They predict "a big civil struggle, analogue to a civil war."⁸⁰ Against whom? Against the democrats. "All of you," wrote the authors, "gentlemen democrats, hands up. (...) The yoke you imposed on Russia is finished."⁸¹ Second, there is a fear of the United States that is suspected of promoting democratic changes in the post-Soviet space in order to undermine and even dismember Russia. These same paranoid fears led Igor Panarin to his mirror fight with the United States in which he projects the Russian castration anxiety, the Russian fear of dismemberment, onto its imagined foe.

Russian castration anxiety and Western fear mongers: Emmanuel Todd and George Friedman

However, one has to admit that these Russian fears and anxieties are sometimes fed by Western publications in which all kinds of wild speculation are ventilated. An example of this is the book *Après l'Empire* by the French author Emmanuel Todd. Todd's book has been read by Panarin and is even quoted by him. In Todd's book one can find the following passage:

As concerns the Russian question, the American strategy had two objectives of which the first is no longer viable and of which the second appears to be more and more difficult to implement. First objective: a disintegration of Russia that could be accelerated by the stimulation of independence in the Caucasus and by an American military presence in Central Asia. These demonstrations of power should encourage centrifugal provincial tendencies even in the interior of the ethnic Russian part of the Russian Federation. This would mean that one seriously underestimates Russian national cohesion. Second objective: to maintain a certain level of tension between

the United States and Russia in order to prevent a rapprochement between Europe and Russia (...), maintaining as long as possible the antagonism inherited from the Cold War.⁸²

Todd mentions the “disintegration of Russia” as an “objective” of the United States, a statement for which he does not give any proof. He forgets that during the Yeltsin era there was a prevailing fear in US government circles of the disintegration of the Russian Federation, because this could lead to a proliferation of failed states with all the dangers this involved for the spread of jihadism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and fissile materials. Although Todd—reassuringly—added that the objective of a disintegration of Russia “is no longer viable,” such a reassurance might not be taken at face value by an apprehensive Russian reader.

Another example of even wilder speculations is the book *The Next Hundred Years* by the American analyst George Friedman.⁸³ Friedman, who acquired a reputation at the beginning of the 1990s by predicting a war between the US and Japan, now predicts a US-Russian confrontation in the Caucasus: “The Russians will press south into the region, reabsorbing Georgia and linking up with their Armenian allies.” According to Friedman, this Russian expansion will be short-lived. He depicts an apocalyptic scenario leading to the “collapse of Russia in the early 2020s”:

The collapse of Russia in the early 2020s will leave Eurasia as a whole in chaos. The Russian Federation itself will crack open as Moscow’s grip shatters. Regions, perhaps even the thinly populated Pacific region, will break away, its interests in the Pacific Basin far outweighing its interest in or connection to Russia proper. Chechnya and the other Muslim regions will break off. Karelia, with close ties to Scandinavia, will secede. Such disintegration will not be confined to Russia. Other countries of the former Soviet Union will fragment as well. The burdens imposed by Moscow will be entirely unsustainable. Where previously the collapse of the Soviet Union led to oligarchs controlling the Russian economy, the collapse of the 2020s will lead to regional leaders going their own way.⁸⁴

It is clear that this kind of wild and unfounded geopolitical speculation only exacerbates Russian fears. That these fears are quite real becomes clear from the description, given by Marlène Laruelle, of

Aleksandr Dugin's proposal to abolish the national republics within the Russian Federation:

Dugin also proposes a general repartition of the Russian Federation, and especially of Siberia, which he considers to have been on the verge of implosion for quite some time. He calls for the abolition of the "national republics," to be replaced by purely administrative regions subservient to Moscow. In *The Foundations of Geopolitics*, he acknowledges his hopes for the breakup of Yakutia, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Buryatia, condemned for their separatism and their capacity to form Buddhist or pan-Turkic anti-Russian axes with the neighboring regions. He wishes to unify them with industrialized regions that have a Russian majority, such as the Urals or the Pacific shore (*Primorskii krai*).⁸⁵

Xenophobia, racism, and ultra-nationalism: The neo-Nazi revival in Russia

We have come to the last aspect, mentioned in the list of five dimensions of the "Weimar Parallel" in Table 1.1: xenophobia, racism, and ultra-nationalism. Weimar Germany was characterized by a proliferation of xenophobic and ultra-nationalist groups and militias. Hitler's SA was only one of them. In post-Soviet Russia, we can observe an equal proliferation which is no less a reason for concern. Anna Politkovskaya mentioned the case of Nikolai Girenko, a 64-year-old human rights activist and academic from Saint Petersburg, who was killed in June 2004 by a rifle shot through the front door of his apartment.⁸⁶ Girenko was an expert witness in court cases against fascist organizations. "His forensic analyses were precise and scholarly," wrote Politkovskaya, "and were often the basis on which neo-Nazis were convicted."⁸⁷ She added: "These trials are rare. In 2003, of 72 crimes identified as being racially motivated, only 11 made it to court. The other cases collapsed when investigators were either unable or, more commonly, unwilling to prove racial motivation."⁸⁸ Politkovskaya pointed to an important fact: the quasi impunity with which these groups can conduct their crimes. They felt they were protected by the state to such a degree that on their websites they boasted the murders they had committed and continued to publish "death lists" of "foes of the Russian people."⁸⁹ Between 1997 and 2004 neo-Nazis violently assaulted at least 15,000 people. Twenty to 30 victims a year died from such assaults.⁹⁰ Not only

were these groups often clandestinely supported by the authorities, but this support was also echoed by public opinion. In opinion polls conducted by the official VTsIOM, institute approval of the neo-Nazi slogan "Russia for the Russians" *doubled* between 1998 and 2004 (from 31 percent to 61 percent).⁹¹ According to Vyacheslav Sukhachev, Professor of Sociology at the University of Saint Petersburg, "the soft encroachment of nationalism increasingly permeates Russia. What is happening is unprecedented."⁹²

Five years later, this upward trend continues. According to a report of the Ministry of the Interior, published in 2009, membership of right-wing and neo-Nazi groups had reached 200,000, with approximately 10,000 facing charges for extremist race-related crimes.⁹³ The most important group is Russian National Unity RNE (*Russkoe Natsionalnoe Yedinstvo*), which was founded in 1990 by Aleksandr Barkashov, a former member of the fascist organization *Pamyat*. RNE members wear uniforms with emblems similar to the Nazi swastika. According to Laruelle, "The party militia incited several racist incidents and appeared to have infiltrated certain key ministries, such as the Ministry of the Interior. It regularly collaborated with regional military units and, with the unobtrusive backing of the authorities, imposed order in the streets, notably in Voronezh and Stavropol."⁹⁴ Other groups have names such as "Movement against Illegal Immigration" (DNPI), "The Slavic Union" (of which the Russian abbreviation is SS), "The Savior" (Spas), "Mad Crowd2 or "Schultz-88" (where 8 refers to the eighth letter of the alphabet: H. The double H means Heil Hitler). A special place in this universe of extreme right organizations is reserved for Orthodox fascist groups that combine outright fascism with religious, often apocalyptic, ideas. One of these is the Russian Orthodox National-Socialist Movement (*Russkoe pravoslavnoe natsional-sotsialisticheskoe dvizhenie*), an offsprung of the RNE. Members of this movement consider Adolf Hitler a new Moses, sent by God to save the white Aryan race. Humanity is divided into two opposing groups: white and Christian, and non-white and non-Christian. The Orthodox National-Socialists are in favor of apartheid and the introduction of heavy penalties for "religious-racist" crimes.⁹⁵

Because of the hidden, and sometimes open, protection enjoyed by these groups from the police, the military, and the local authorities, the reaction of the law-enforcing agencies has remained extremely soft. Ultimately, this *laissez-faire* policy led not only to *more* racist violence, but also to *a new kind* of violence in the form of terrorist attacks. On June 12, 2005, two RNE members blew up the Grozny-Moscow train.

On August, 21, 2006, members of The Savior, a neo-Nazi group led by Nikolai Korolev, a former FSB officer, bombed the Cherkizovsky market in Moscow, the largest market of Russia, frequented by many merchants from Central Asia. Fourteen people were killed, most of them Tajiks and Uzbeks. In August 2007, the Moscow-Saint Petersburg train was blown up with a bomb identical to the one used two years before. This escalation of racist violence led the Russian National Anti-Terrorist Committee in March 2009 to name the neo-Nazi groups as "one of the major terrorist threats to Russia."⁹⁶ Having become uncontrollable, the neo-Nazi and hooligan groups had become a direct threat for the government. This led, temporarily, to increased repression by the law enforcing agencies, but this was not sustained. In July 2009, Galina Kozhevnikova of the Moscow SOVA Center, a human rights organization that conducts research on nationalism and racism, complained that in the first half of 2009, "we observe a return of the 2005–2006 sentencing practice, i.e. offenders found guilty of hate propaganda get away without substantial punishment and feel free to continue their activity."⁹⁷ Also the killings continued. In the first six months of 2009, 32 people were killed by racist gangs, 15 in Moscow, making Moscow an extreme dangerous place for Caucasians, Central Asians, black students from Africa, and other visible minorities.

In December 2010 some 5500 football fans rioted in Manezh Square, near the Kremlin's walls, attacking North Caucasus natives and shouting racist slogans, an event which had been predicted for a long time. It was a reaction to the murder of Yegor Sviridov, 28, member of Fratria, a radical fan club of Spartak Moscow, in a quarrel with North Caucasus natives.⁹⁸ Raising their arms in a Hitler salute and chanting *Sieg heil!* and *Russia for the Russians!* the mobsters clashed with the police and ran amok in the Moscow metro, beating hundreds of dark-skinned foreigners and stabbing two Uzbek workers to death.⁹⁹ The government, already being accused of being extremely soft on right-wing extremist violence, while formally condemning the racist pogrom, seemed at the same time to co-opt it when Prime Minister Vladimir Putin laid flowers on the grave of the murdered football fan, but abstained from doing the same for the murdered Uzbeks. It did not come as a surprise. Putin had some personal friends among the participants in the forbidden rally, such as the ultra-nationalist Alexander Zaldostanov, nicknamed "Surgeon," leader of the *Nochnye Luki*, the Night Wolves motorcycle club. Putin had personally visited the club's headquarters. He had given Zaldostanov a Russian flag and waved him and his followers goodbye when he left Moscow in July 2010 for a nationalist motorcycle rally

in support of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in the Ukrainian town of Sevastopol. Zaldostanov, a self-proclaimed Russian Orthodox believer, told *Rusnovosti.ru* after the riots that he did not want to feel like “a part of the diaspora” in his own country.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

Does there exist a “Weimar Parallel?” That was the question we tried to answer. We have seen a striking number of similarities between the developments in the Weimar Republic and post-Soviet Russia. Citizens of both countries faced a loss of territories, the creation of a non-contiguous territory (Kaliningrad), and the new reality of minorities suddenly living abroad. Both countries were hit by economic crises, agrarian crises, hyperinflation, and a simultaneous accumulation of social and political problems. In both countries, democratic mass politics were introduced and extremist parties elected in parliament. The parliaments of both countries were gradually sidelined. The old elites played an important role in the authoritarian assault on the young, not yet stabilized democracies in both countries. The struggle between democratic and anti-democratic forces was inspired in both countries by national symbols: the flag in Germany and the national anthem in Russia. Crime, corruption and political murder were rampant in both countries and the prisons were overcrowded. The growing violence was partly a consequence of earlier baby booms in both countries that produced greater cohorts of (angry) young men. The result—in Germany as well as in Russia—was an uncivil society with a generalized lack of trust and social capital. All this had important socio-psychological consequences. The populations in both countries felt impoverished, diminished in social status, disoriented, and humiliated. Soon blame games started. Instead of confronting the real, historical roots of the national breakdown there was a historical amnesia, combined with a search for scapegoats. Blame was attributed to internal and external “foes,” which produced high waves of racism and xenophobia in both countries which was accompanied by ultra-nationalist fervor and a nostalgia for the lost empire.

Of course historical situations are never completely identical. There still remain national differences and local peculiarities, different actors, and the changing international context. However, the—many—resemblances between Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia are striking. They are, indeed, so striking that it seems completely legitimate to use the expression “Weimar Russia.” This brings us to our next question

which is the subject of Part II. This question is: if there are so many striking resemblances between the Weimar Republic and post-Soviet Russia, does this mean that both situations will develop the same historical dynamic? In other words, will Russia repeat (in its own, Russian way) the experience of Weimar in which the trends we analyzed led to a crisis of democracy and, at the end, to the rise of a fascist regime? Is Russia doomed to follow in Weimar's steps and subsequently develop into a modern version of the Third Reich? Such a view would certainly be too simplistic and also dangerously fatalistic. Situations can be shown to have many similarities, but they are never the same. Even if most indicators point in the same direction, this does not mean that there do not remain important differences between apparently similar situations. Although there is in Russia, for instance, a proliferation of racist hooligan groups and violent neo-Nazi gangs, there is no evidence in Russia of the party militias which played such a decisive role in the emergence of the two fascist systems in the inter-war period. A second difference is that the present regime, despite its authoritarian character, still claims to function according to accepted democratic standards. As long as the regime wants to uphold this claim it is obliged to organize elections and to tolerate small pockets of critical opposition. However, do these few positive factors have the strength to counterbalance a more repressive scenario? The present regime in Russia has certain similarities to the early years of Mussolini's rule in Italy: it is authoritarian, often fascist in style, with a defunct, though formally still working parliament, but it seems not yet to be fully fascist. The regime is situated in a grey area between simple authoritarianism and ideological fascism. This regime—like that of the early Mussolini before 1925—has not yet fully developed its internal dynamic. It finds itself in a delicate balance. The question seems still to be open as to where this dynamic will lead. We will turn in the following chapters to some features of this dynamic, such as the activities of the Kremlin youth Nashi, the development of an ultra-nationalist ideology in the ruling United Russia party, the war conducted by the regime in Chechnya, and the invasion of Georgia. Before this, however, we have to clarify what we mean by "fascism." We need to strip it of its polemical connotations in order to have a scientific term we can work with.

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Part II

The Specter of a Fascist Russia

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5

What is Fascism?

Introduction: Putin the macho man

When Putin became acting president on December 31, 1999, he was unknown to the larger public. He seemed not to stand out from the crowd, rather resembling another of these grey apparatchiks and faceless bureaucrats who populate the Russian ministries and government agencies. However, in the years that followed, he carefully built another image: that of a virile, powerful, sportive macho action man. One could see pictures of the Russian president, shooting a tiger with a tranquilizer gun in Siberia. Another time he was taking the measurements of a polar bear, or shooting a whale with a crossbow. He went in a mini-submarine and dived to the floor of the world's deepest lake and he watched a bare-knuckle fight with Hollywood macho star Jean-Claude Van Damme. In August 2010, he flew as a second pilot in a BE-200 firefighting aircraft over the Ryazan region when great fires ravaged Russia—showing that he himself was in charge of the rescue operations. Other pictures showed him naked from the waist up, on fishing and hunting trips. In August 2010 he was interviewed by a reporter from *Kommersant*, wearing a polo shirt and dark glasses, driving 1200 miles across Russia's Far East in a yellow Lada sports car, testing a new part of the highway that connects Moscow with Vladivostok. Three months later he had his hands on the steering wheel of a Formula 1 Renault racing car. "He was test driving the car for several hours at speeds of up to 150 miles per hour," wrote a reporter, "donned with a patriotic helmet emblazoned with the Russian flag and Russia's national symbol a double-headed eagle."¹

In Russia, Putin's image building is highly effective. Young female students of journalism stripped off for his 58th birthday, posing in

underwear for a “Putin” calendar. Marlène Laruelle, an analyst, spoke of a new personality cult. She wrote: “The Kremlin’s success is Vladimir Putin’s own personal feat. Indeed he has generated an increasingly visible cult of personality, which is marked by a proliferation of photos, portraits, busts of the head of state, and endorsements in opinion polls and the literary world as being not only the father of the nation, but also the ideal husband.”² But this personality cult is different from what existed in Soviet times. Stalin was represented on huge posters as a reassuring father figure, Brezhnev as a smiling bureaucrat. However, neither Stalin, nor Brezhnev thought it necessary to pose as hunters or pilots, to ride a horse with a bare chest, or to drive a racing car with great speed (this despite the fact that Brezhnev was a passionate collector of cars). This was simply not the communist style. It was, however, the fascist style. As early as 2006 Anna Politkovskaya wrote: “Society is moving towards fascism.”³ Was she right?

The fascist style is characterized by two elements: First, by promoting virility, manliness, and physical strength and second, by a fascination with speed and modern means of transport, especially fast cars and planes. Both elements were prominently present in Italian Fascism. Mussolini let himself be filmed with a bare chest, harvesting corn. In a book, *Grande Manifestazione Aerea*, published after the air show in Turin on July 3, 1932, there was a full page photograph of the *Duce* as a pilot. Ostentatious virility was one of the characteristics of Italian Fascism. According to Victoria de Grazia, “the Duce identified his own much-vaunted sexual prowess with the virility of the fascist system. Smirking at the impotence of antifascism.”⁴ “Mussolini appeared in the cinema news and on pictures with that double nature which at the same time transmitted a double political message: horseman and statesman, skier and yachtsman, pilot and farmer.”⁵ The statesman-sportsman was a model for his followers—in the first place for the blackshirts of the Fascist militias. In 1919 the fascist futurist Mario Carli evoked the image of the Fascist blackshirt as follows: “With his ‘ardent-proud, guileless eyes’ and ‘sensual-energetic mouth quick to kiss passionately, sing out sweetly, and command imperiously,’ the so-called fascist of the first hour was emphatically a free man; his ‘sober-virile elegance’ left him ever ready ‘to run, fight, escape, dance, and arouse a crowd.’”⁶ The Italian futurists, a group of writers and artists who became loyal supporters of Mussolini’s regime, not only glorified virility, but also glorified *speed*. This was especially true in the case in the Futurist manifesto, written in 1909 by Filippo Tomaso Marinetti. “In their manifesto of 1909, the Italian Futurists made

speed the measure of all things, the goal and principle of life and its true beauty. (...) this dynamic led to an exaltation of violence and conflict and praise for the unusual and abhorrent.”⁷ In article 4 of the manifesto one could read, “that the splendour of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing automobile with its bonnet adorned with great tubes like serpents with explosive breath (...) a roaring motor car which seems to run on machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.”⁸ And article 11 read as follows: “We will sing (...) great-breasted locomotives, puffing on the rails like enormous steel horses with long tubes for bridle, and the gliding flight of aeroplanes whose propeller sounds like the flapping of a flag and the applause of enthusiastic crowds.”⁹ Hartmut Rosa wrote in his study on the role of acceleration in modern time that Filippo Tomaso Marinetti’s Futurist manifesto of 1909 “celebrated in a euphoric way the ecstasy and the triumph of the simultaneously newly created and henceforth ‘eternal, omnipresent speed’ and saw in it a new aesthetics, later even a new religion and ethics.”¹⁰ This new religion was fascism. Rosa mentioned that the anti-fascist writer Walter Benjamin criticized these fascist celebrations of speed for the sake of speed and expressed a “speed protest” (*Geschwindigkeitsprotest*) in his essay on the Parisian *Flaneur*. Putin seems to have fully adopted this Latin macho style, characteristic of Italian fascism. Is he therefore a fascist? Not necessarily. One should not jump to conclusions only on the basis of a leader’s style.

Russia: A “normal” authoritarian state?

It is not easy to characterize the exact nature of Putin’s regime. Many Western analysts have tried to do this—with varying results. Apart from the shared view that the Russian political system is not democratic and displays strong authoritarian tendencies, a more detailed in-depth analysis is still lacking. The usual characterization “not democratic,” for instance, can mean different things. It can mean, first, that the process of democratization has temporarily stalled, but that there still exists hope that the process will resume. It can mean, second, that the process of democratization has definitively stalled and that a—rather static—autocratic regime has established itself in a grey area between democracy and oppressive dictatorship. A third possibility is that Russia is moving in an opposite direction, distancing itself more and more from the ideals of democracy and the rule of law, constantly reinforcing its autocratic tendencies.

Putin's regime has been interpreted in many different ways. At the beginning of Putin's first presidential term, Western public opinion felt that Putin's preoccupation with re-establishing the authority of the central government was no impediment for the development of a Western-style democracy. The idea was that, although the process of democratization had slowed down, it was, in principle, still on track. However, in the years that followed—especially during his second presidential term—these illusions rapidly evaporated. Although Putin did his utmost to maintain a democratic façade and to give the impression that he strictly adhered to the letter of the constitution, even the most naive Western observers had to admit that Russia was not a democratic state—even not an “electoral democracy”. As a consequence, in 2005 the Freedom House, which assesses the degree of freedom in the different countries of the world, changed Russia's status from “partly free” to “not free.”¹¹ Until today it has kept Russia in this category. But labeling Russia as “not free” does not answer the aforementioned question. In which direction is Russia moving?

Calling Putin's regime “authoritarian” does not clarify the situation. There are many authoritarian regimes in the world of all descriptions. We find them in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and in Europe in Lukashenko's Belarus. A question that has become more acute is: how far has contemporary Russia developed the traits of a very specific authoritarian country, a fascist country? For some readers, this question may seem too far-fetched. Do the Russian leaders not do their utmost to uphold a democratic façade? Do they—especially Medvedev—not talk a lot about strengthening the role of (international) law? And do they not strictly adhere to formal procedures? Putin, for instance, did not change the constitution before the presidential elections of 2008—as some expected him to do. So far, this strategy seemed to have worked. Many people in the West consider Russia just an “ordinary” authoritarian state—not different from, for instance, China, Algeria, or Turkmenistan, but is it?

Russia: An “unconsolidated fascist state”?

Walter Laqueur wrote recently that optimism in the West about Russia has been replaced by pessimism and that many think that Russia is developing into a system that is “similar” to fascism. But he added that this is possibly “exaggerated.”¹² Another author, Alexander J. Motyl, however, suggested that Russia is a fascist country. In 2007 Motyl

published an article entitled "Inside Track: Is Putin's Russia Fascist?"¹³ According to Motyl, "Fascist states are authoritarian states with a few special characteristics thrown in: strong and vigorous leaders, cults of strong and vigorous leaders, and supine populations that willingly accept strong and vigorous leadership and thereby actively engage in their own self-repression. Fascist states are thus authoritarian states that glorify strength and vigor in the ruling elites and whose subject populations also glorify strength and vigor in the ruling elites."¹⁴ "Like Mussolini," Motyl continued, "Putin favors stylish black clothing that connotes toughness and seriousness. Like Mussolini, Putin likes to be photographed in the presence of weapons and other instruments of war. And like Mussolini, Putin likes to show off his presumed physical prowess. Russians (...) are grateful to him for having restored their sense of pride in themselves and in their formerly humiliated country. Just this same sense of pride was at the core of Germans' support of Hitler."¹⁵ The question: "Is Putin's Russia fascist?" received a positive answer from Motyl. But he formulated one caveat: "Although Putin's Russia possesses the defining characteristics of fascism, they have not yet assumed the form of a consolidated, coherent and hence fully stable political system. These characteristics have emerged haphazardly only in the last few years, and although they may now all be in place, it is not yet clear that they are here to stay. In that sense, Russia today resembles Germany in 1933 or Italy in the mid-1920s. Russia could follow in their footsteps, or it could falter and find its way back to some form of democracy."¹⁶ According to Motyl, Russia must therefore be considered an unconsolidated fascist state.

Motyl's analysis was criticized by Andreas Umland,¹⁷ who wrote that "Motyl is crying wolf too early. By Motyl's standards, not only Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, but a number of non-democratic regimes of the 20th century would have to be classified as fascist. (...) While the Kremlin's current rhetoric is imperialistic, bellicose and nationalistic, this is still far from amounting to an ideology of revolutionary ultra-nationalism—the most consensual definition of fascism available in international comparative fascist studies today. (...). Without any doubt, Russian fascism, represented by such figures as Vladimir Zhirinovskii or Alexander Dugin, reaches deeply into the mainstream of Russian high politics and public discourse. Yet, neither Zhirinovskii nor Dugin are members of the Russian presidential administration or government. (...) If Putin's administration is fascist: How should one label all those Russian right-wing extremists who complain that its policies are still too liberal and pro-Western?"¹⁸

Fascism and the ideology of national rebirth

Indeed, how convincing is Motyl's analysis? Motyl stated that "the defining characteristics" of fascism are in place, but he did not explicitly mention what these characteristics are. Wearing black clothing and showing off physical prowess, fishing or riding a horse bare chested, or being photographed in the presence of weapons, are, in itself, not enough to define Putin's regime as "fascist." Umland reproached Motyl for not being aware that Russia failed to fulfill one of the basic criteria of fascism, which is that it should have "an ideology of revolutionary ultra-nationalism." Umland was here referring to a definition of fascism coined by Roger Griffin which he explicitly supports, that "fascism is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism."¹⁹ This definition stresses the presence of an ultra-nationalist ideology in which ideas of national rebirth ("palingenesis") are expressed. Ideologies of national rebirth were, indeed, present in Fascist Italy and in Nazi Germany. Fascist Italy was for Mussolini a reconstitution of the former Roman Empire. And Nazi Germany was given the name Third Reich, because it was considered a reincarnation of two earlier German empires: the Holy Roman Empire and the German Empire, created by Otto von Bismarck. Umland seems to be right: an official and openly proclaimed ultra-nationalist ideology of national rebirth which resembles the grandiose fantasies about an imminent restoration of national greatness in which Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany indulged, is—at least at an official level—lacking in Russia.

Putin's crypto-imperialism

When Umland emphasizes that Putin's regime lacks this "palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism," he seems to have a point. But when we have a closer look at it this is not so much the case. Just imagine that Putin's regime would openly declare its intention to restore the former empire. In that case, the West would immediately mobilize against these plans. Therefore, the occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (the population of the latter numbered 13,000 in 2010,²⁰ which is the population of a small town), are not shown as being land grabs and hidden annexations,²¹ but as the "creation of sovereign states." This strategy is not new, but fits into a centuries-old pattern of Russian imperialism. It was even observed by Karl Marx, who wrote: "Before Russia incorporated the Crimea, it proclaimed its *independence*."²² It is just by hiding his real intentions that Putin can prepare in silence for his next

territorial annexation. Putin knows that openly proclaiming a strategy of imperialist reconquest would be counter-productive. It would lead to international opposition which could prevent the realization of these plans. Putin is an intelligent man. He knows that he has to hide his revisionist and imperialist objectives and has to behave like a normal, democratic (or almost democratic), legalistic politician in order to succeed. And as a professional former KGB agent Putin can easily take on different roles. He can be vulgar and aggressive when he addresses the Chechens whom he threatened to chase and “exterminate in their outhouses”, he can be icy and threatening against democratically elected Georgian and Ukrainian leaders, but he can also behave as a modern and “almost Western” leader, smiling and cracking jokes when he joins the leaders of the richest democracies at the summit meetings of the G-8. Putin is too shrewd to let himself and his regime be labeled “fascist,” but this does not mean that his regime is not developing traits of a fascist regime. We have to be conscious of the fact that a regime can be characterized as fascist, even if it does not openly proclaim and vindicate this fascist character in an official state ideology. In this case a regime must be labeled crypto-fascist, where “crypto” means that the regime, deliberately, conceals its real character and objectives. Hiding oneself, pretending not to be what one is, deceiving others about one’s intentions and projects is the second nature of a secret service. Putin’s regime is unique in the world: it is a regime that represents and is run by one of the oldest, most professional, and most powerful secret services of the world which has its roots in a oppressive, totalitarian society of which it was the tool. Its main role and purpose today is not different from its role in Stalin’s era: to deceive others about its real goals and intentions.

Umland wrote: “While the Kremlin’s current rhetoric is imperialistic, bellicose and nationalistic, this is still far from amounting to an ideology of revolutionary ultra-nationalism—the most consensual definition of fascism available in international comparative fascist studies today.” For Umland, the basic criterion on which to decide if a state may be labeled “fascist” seems to be the presence of an officially proclaimed ultra-nationalist ideology of national revival. My thesis is that the Russian leadership is aware that the proclamation of such an official state ideology would mobilize international opposition and thereby hamper the realization of the “imperial rebirth” it intends to bring about. Umland’s criterion, therefore, although it was more or less valid for the period 1919–1945 (and even then the fascist leaders not openly proclaimed the details of their imperialist plans that were part of the

“national revival”), is no longer valid today. And this is so because of the historical experience of the fascist regimes of the inter-war period and the almost unanimous condemnation of these regimes in the contemporary world. The Russian leaders do not openly express their desire for a national rebirth in terms of *Lebensraum* or neo-imperial conquest as was carried out by Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy. They express their ambitions in a softer and more indirect way, claiming “spheres of privileged interest.” The difference, however, is only a difference in tactics, not in overall strategy. An ideology of national rebirth, which does not exclude the use of annexation policies and outright military conquest, seems to exist. It exists in the Russian media, in the publications of Russian strategic thinkers, in the parties that are represented in the Duma, the presidential party, United Russia, included.

A second objection made by Umland against labeling the Russian political system “fascist” is based on the fact that some well-known fascists, such as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and Aleksandr Dugin, are not represented in the Russian government. This criticism misses the point for two reasons: first, because even if these men are not *in* government, both are close, indeed very close, to government circles. Zhirinovskiy’s Liberal-Democratic Party is a fascist party which was created and invented by the Kremlin and the KGB. It supports Putin’s government wholeheartedly and unreservedly in the Duma. The same applies to Aleksandr Dugin. Dugin may not be in government, but he is the leader of the Eurasian Movement to which many prominent persons, also close to Putin, belong. Dugin was a much acclaimed lecturer at the Academy of the General Staff in Moscow and at the Institute for Strategic Research, both positions indicating high patronage from within the regime.

Second, and more important, even if there are people around who are more outspokenly and openly fascist,²³ then this fact alone does not invalidate the possibility that Putin’s regime must be labeled fascist. Also Mussolini had to face internal opposition from the blackshirts (*camicie nere*) within his own party. These were militias of former combatants, who were more radical than himself and who, especially in the first years of his rule, were difficult to restrain.²⁴ The same is true for Hitler, who was confronted by the revolutionary fascist radicalism of the SA, which led him to order the murder of Ernst Röhm, its leader.²⁵

I think that there are other, better arguments than those brought forward by Umland, which can be used against Motyl’s analysis, such as, for instance, that Motyl’s analysis remains too much at a phenomenological level, emphasizing superficial external appearances (stylish

black clothing, presence of weapons, showing off physical prowess) that are characteristic of a fascist style. In order to sustain Motyl's argument, it needs to be further elaborated and refined. Only then can we decide if his analysis is fundamentally biased or if it points in the right direction.

Fascism: A "container concept"?

In recent years, fascism has become a "container concept," one that is used as a huge garbage bin in which all kinds of (often contradictory) characteristics are thrown together in order to denounce a regime. Even democratic leaders do not escape. French President De Gaulle has been called a fascist by protesters, as well as US presidents Richard Nixon and George W. Bush. "Fascism" has become the international "f-word," used by activists of all stripes and colors to denounce everything and everybody. "Until a recent date," wrote Pierre Milza, a French historian, "the disapproval that is aroused by every reference to fascism has made of the use of the word a polemical tool, even a fighting instrument capable of mobilizing important parts of public opinion with antifascist slogans."²⁶ It is these two characteristics of the word "fascism," its polemical use and its "container" character, which have hindered its use as a scientific term. According to the sociologist Max Weber "the use of undifferentiated collective terms with which everyday language works, always hides unclear thinking."²⁷ In order to promote clear thinking it is, therefore, important to agree on a definition. However, defining fascism has been an extremely difficult task with which three generations of historians and political scientists have already struggled since Mussolini's *fasci di combattimento* (combat groups) made their first appearance in post-First World War Italy. In trying to establish a scientifically satisfactory definition of fascism three problems need to be confronted:

1. The first problem was whether the name "fascism" should be exclusively reserved for the movement and regime of Benito Mussolini which was the first to label itself "fascist", or whether "fascism" was a generic concept, an extended family consisting of different members.
2. If one opts for the second solution and considers "fascism" to be a generic concept, the next question is whether the label "fascist" only applies to movements and regimes of the period 1919–1945, or whether it can be applied more broadly to encompass post-Second World War movements and regimes.

3. Both preceding questions can only be answered if one agrees on the defining characteristics of fascism. Here we have to decide whether to emphasize the more *structural* elements: the sociological, economic, and political factors that played a role in the rise and development of fascist systems, or whether we should take the *ideology* of fascism as a point of departure, its self-definition, and especially the ideological justifications and explanations given by the fascist leaders themselves.

Ur-Fascism?

Umberto Eco found in modern fascist regimes and movements characteristics and elements which can also be observed in other historical periods before the emergence of modern fascism. He has enumerated 14 of these characteristics which he considers the elements of “eternal fascism” or *Ur-Fascism*.²⁸ His list comprises among others the following elements: a cult of tradition, the rejection of modernity (except of modern technology), action for action’s sake, a fear of difference (“Ur-Fascism is therefore racist by definition”),²⁹ and nationalism, which gives people with no social identity “the most common privilege of all, that of being born in the same country.”³⁰ Eco further mentioned the feeling of being humiliated by the enemy, elitism, a contempt for the weak, a cult of heroism, machismo, and populism.³¹ His list is interesting because it emphasizes the fact that, while fascism is a totally unique and modern political phenomenon, many of its constituent elements pre-date the fascist era. In some cases, these elements are already modern (such as nationalism), and in others they are “of all times” (traditionalism, elitism, xenophobia). Pre-First World War Wilhelminian Germany was traditionalist, elitist, authoritarian, nationalist, and xenophobic, but it was not fascist. However, there already existed in German society many elements which—if brought together with other elements—could (but not necessarily would) lead to a fascist solution. In this sense, Italian Fascism and German Nazism resembled laboratory situations in which a mixture of old and new chemical substances produces a totally new substance which reveals itself to be highly explosive. Despite the fact that both Italy and Germany possessed many of the characteristics of Eco’s Ur-Fascism the “laboratory situations” and the substances that were “used” in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were not the same. This was the reason for an important controversy among historians and political scientists: could Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Germany be subsumed under the same category, fascism? Or should the name

"Fascism" (with a capital F) be exclusively reserved to describe Italy under Mussolini?

Fascism: A unique historical phenomenon or a universal concept?

The answer to this question seems at first sight not so difficult. Even at the time that Italy was the first and only country in the world to call itself "Fascist," it was already considered by contemporary critics—especially Marxists³²—as a new political model, which soon could be followed elsewhere, even if its inherent nationalism and anti-universalism seemed to stand in the way of the development of something like a "Fascist International," like the Socialist International or the Komintern. Unlike Hitler, who considered National Socialism an exclusively German creed,³³ Mussolini presented his Fascist regime as a model for other countries. In an article on "The Doctrine of Fascism," written together with Giovanni Gentile, his minister of education, and published in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* in 1932, the *Duce* boasted "that this will be the century of authority, a century of 'the Right', a fascist century (...). From now on fascism has in the world the universality of all doctrines that, in the process of being realized, represent a moment of the history of the human spirit."³⁴

We have also to take into account the fact that already at the time of "fascism in one country", Italian Fascism³⁵—despite its "Italianness" and its references to the Roman empire as a reclaimed national past—had indeed become a model that found adherents elsewhere. This was not confined to Germany—to Hitler's NSDAP. Similar movements also began in Great Britain, where in 1923 Rotha Lintorn-Orman founded the British Fascisti, and in France, where in 1924 Pierre Taittinger had taken the initiative for the fascist youth movement *Jeunesses patriotes*. This does not mean that all fascist systems were the same. There was, first of all, a considerable difference between fascist movements and fascist regimes. And there were also big differences between the two fascist regimes of the inter-war period: Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. These differences were not only emphasized by adversaries of the Nazi regime, but also by leading Nazis, who secretly or openly despised Italian Fascism as something inferior.³⁶

The reasons used to stress the incompatibility of Hitler's *Third Reich* with Italy's Fascist regime were, of course, totally different after the war. Nazi Germany was not only considered more imperialist and more totalitarian than Mussolini's Italy, but its bureaucratically and brutally

organized genocide of millions of Jews and other minorities set it apart as a unique criminal regime. So unique, indeed, that according to some historians it was impossible to bring Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany under the same yoke.³⁷ This supposed uniqueness of the Nazi regime was one of the factors that stood in the way of the development of a concept of generic fascism after 1945. The debate in the German Federal Republic played an important role in this as Nazism was considered a unique historical event and was supposed to have no equivalent in human history. Looking for causes of this unique German regime an explanation was found in the equally unique development of German history, the so-called *Sonderweg*. However, when a regime is considered totally unique, one no longer looks for historical parallels and one certainly does not consider this regime as a representative of a broader category.

A second factor that hindered the development of a concept of generic fascism after 1945, was the tendency to reduce Nazism to "Hitlerism." This was the theory that the Nazi regime was the work of one evil man, Adolf Hitler, who, together with some close associates, had misled the German people. The theory had the convenience that it exonerated the German population and put all the blame on Hitler and his small inner circle.³⁸ There was still another, third, factor, that stood in the way of the development of a concept of generic fascism in the immediate post-war period. This was due to the emergence of the Cold War. When, after the Second World War, a comparison was made between Nazism and another repressive regime, it was not so much with Fascist Italy, as with Stalinist Russia. Both countries were considered to be a part of the same category, that of totalitarian states.³⁹ In this "red is brown" equation more resemblance was found between these two ideologically opposed systems than between the two twin sisters of European fascism.

In the 1960s, when the Soviet Union gradually lost its totalitarian character and became a more or less "normal" authoritarian state, and when in Germany a new generation entered university, a new debate on fascism started. The question of generic fascism was again put on the agenda. An important role in this discussion was played by a voluminous study written by the German historian Ernst Nolte.⁴⁰ Nolte explained the emergence of the two fascist regimes in the inter-war period as a reaction against the communist threat—a theory which met with much criticism. But Nolte's merit was to put Nazism and Italian Fascism on an equal footing, thereby stimulating a renewed interest among historians and political scientists in comparing both regimes. This led to new

discoveries, but also to new controversies. One of the main problems that had to be dealt with was the fact that fascist regimes are historical entities which develop in different national contexts with different political, economic, and cultural traditions, together with different actors. How could one compare such different systems? One reaction was to simply *deny* the possibility of a theory of generic fascism on the grounds that the various regimes and movements were too different to bring them together under the same heading: "fascism." The other reaction was to start detailed and painstaking research, comparing the different aspects of Fascism and Nazism, looking for common ground.

Fascism: Deflating of a concept

One of the opponents of a theory of generic fascism was Gilbert Allardyce, who, in 1979 published a frontal attack on theories of generic fascism in an article entitled *What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept*.⁴¹ According to Allardyce, "we have agreed to use the word [fascism] without agreeing on how to define it." As early as the 1920s, he continued, "emerged a popular image of fascism as an international movement, a phenomenon that found purest expression in Italy and Germany, but also appeared in a wide number of other countries. When stripped of national trappings, it is commonly believed, all of these movements had a common characteristic that was the essence of fascism itself." Allardyce went on to criticize those historians who wanted to "unearth the 'missing link' that unites the different individuals and parties in a generic fascism." It was to search for a cat in the dark, he said, because "the notion of generic fascism exists in faith." However, Allardyce was not completely consistent with himself. After having explained that Italian Fascism and German Nazism are too different to be compared, he explicitly supported Nolte's proposal to reserve the name "era of fascism" for the period 1919–1945, thereby implicitly bringing both regimes under the same heading, what he claimed to refuse. Equally Allardyce's conclusion that "Fascism is 'dead', seemingly swallowed up and consumed by the Second World War"—was premature. Was fascism definitively dead and buried after 1945? Experiences of regimes in Latin America and in the Arab world tell another story. Fascism expert Zeev Sternhell and two colleagues seem to come closer to the truth, writing that "fascism is not an exceptional phenomenon, nor is it the simple result of the crisis that follows the cataclysm of 1914–1918. Fascism, to say it all, does not exclusively belong to the interwar period, nor can it be understood as an anomaly

or, to repeat the famous expression of Benedetto Croce, a “parenthesis” of contemporary history.”⁴²

Thin and thick methods: Formulating abstract definitions or building ideal types?

How did both those theorists, who had been attacked by Allardyce, proceed? How could they prove that it was useful and legitimate to speak about “generic fascism” and that this concept—far from comparing eggs with prunes—could provide valuable new knowledge? There are several methods to compare complex historical phenomena. Here I would like to present two of these methods, the first of which I would like to call the “thick” method, the other the “thin” method. The “thick” method resembles the work of an artist who makes a clay figure of a woman and goes on to add small details until the figure resembles the image of femininity that he has in his head. The end product is more like a composition. It may have the nose of his sister, the ears of the girl next-door, and the legs of an old school friend. It does not matter. The ‘thin’ method is the opposite: it is the method of a physician who takes X-ray pictures of his patients. He ignores their outward appearances and looks straight through the flesh of their bodies at what is behind: their skeleton. The “thin” method is a method of ultimate abstraction until one arrives at the ‘essence’ or the ‘core’ of a phenomenon.

The “thick” method is a method used to develop “ideal types” (*Idealtypen*), as was proposed by the German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920). For him an “ideal type” was not a copy of reality, but a virtual concept in which you collect all the relevant properties, found in different manifestations of a phenomenon. The result is, what Weber called, an ‘artificial construct’ in which the properties of different, existing (or past), historical entities are taken together and accumulated.⁴³ Specific, individual historical phenomena can be compared with this virtual “ideal type” to assess the distance between this individual phenomenon and the ideal type. The ideal type, however, must not be considered to be a norm, nor an “ideal” in the idealistic sense. According to Weber “there are ideal types of brothels as well as of religions.” It is and remains a purely scientific construct that only has a heuristic value. Ideal types are heuristic instruments *par excellence* to analyze complex historical phenomena, such as “Christendom,” “liberalism,” or “imperialism.”⁴⁴ If it is possible to construct an ideal type of fascism, one can assess the relative distance that exists between the different historical movements and regimes on the one hand and the ideal type on the other (there will

always remain a distance, because the historical reality that one studies will never coincide with the ideal type). In the next two chapters we will elaborate further on the differences between the “thick” and the “thin” method and indicate how they can be used in our search for a usable definition of fascism.

6

Defining Fascism: The “Thin” Method

The thin method: Roger Griffin’s “fascist minimum”

There is an approach, proposed by Roger Griffin that I would like to call the “thin” method. It is the “X-ray method” that I mentioned in the last chapter. It is a method of ultimate abstraction. Instead of accumulating supposed characteristics of fascist systems and bringing them together in an ideal type—one asks: what is the *essence* of fascist systems or, as Griffin called it: what is the “fascist minimum”? According to Griffin, one had to find “a theory of the fascist minimum, especially if, when reduced to its bare essentials, the resulting definition is more economical and “elegant” than previous ones.”¹ Griffin’s aim was to identify “a common core,” in order “to identify what constitutes its ‘family’ trait.” Griffin came up with the definition that “Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythical core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism.”² Griffin’s definition stressed that fascism is, essentially, an ideology in which *national revival* (palingenesis) has a central place, and that it is populist and ultra-nationalist and thereby “precludes the nationalism of dynastic rulers and imperial powers before the rise of mass politics and democratic forces (...), as well as the populist (liberal) nationalism which overthrows a colonial power to institute representative democracy.”³

Griffin’s method has been severely criticized, especially by historians. Robert Paxton, for instance, wrote: “I shall not be very interested in finding similarities—deciding whether some regime falls within the definition of some fascist essence. That kind of taxonomy, so widespread in the literature of fascism, does not lead very far.”⁴ And he added, citing another historian: Marc Bloch, “Comparison (...) is most useful for eliciting differences.”⁵ When Paxton said he preferred to compare

systems in order to find differences, then this is quite understandable: a historian cannot satisfy himself with a definition—an abstract formula—because he wants to have access to the full richness and variety of his subject matter in order to be able to find hidden truths and new causal connections. But others, especially political scientists, might be more interested in the historical similarities between fascist systems. The two approaches, however, do not exclude each other. They are, on the contrary, complementary. Even Griffin did not find his definition by some kind of divine inspiration, but only as the result of studying many history books and monographs in which the similarities and the differences between the various national systems were described.

Fortunately, Paxton does not go so far as some of his colleagues, who completely deny the possibility of a generic concept of fascism.⁶ “If we followed their advice,” he wrote, “we would call Hitler’s regime Nazism, Mussolini’s regime Fascism, and each of the other kindred movements by its own name. We would treat each one as a discrete phenomenon.”⁷ Paxton says he “rejects such nominalism.” He is right to do so because this kind of nominalism would make any comparison between different political systems impossible.

A critique of Roger Griffin’s definition

The question is not so much if a definition of a “fascist minimum” is possible. I think it is. The question is if Griffin’s definition formulates this minimum in an adequate way – which I think it does not. The minimum is formulated by Griffin in a too minimalistic way, which leads him to omit an important feature of the fascist phenomenon. But let us first see how far we can agree with his definition. We can agree that fascism is essentially a way of thinking, an ideology,⁸ that the mythical core of this ideology consists of ultra-nationalism (a nationalism that takes on a quasi-religious character),⁹ that it is palingenetic (which means that it includes ideas and dreams of national rebirth and revival), and that it is populist, which means that it is linked to the emergence of modern mass democracies.¹⁰ But is this enough to define fascist regimes? I do not think so. Because a “palingenetic form of ultra-nationalism” does not indicate the way in which the realization of this national revival is envisaged. Let us assume for an instant that this revival only was envisaged as a cultural revival or as an economic revival of the nation. In this case the fall-out of fascist regimes in the twentieth century would not have been so disastrous as it worked out in practice. Nolte, for instance, described the first phase of Mussolini’s regime, in which

Mussolini concentrated on the economic modernization of Italy, as an *Entwicklungsdiktatur*—a developmental dictatorship. Had Mussolini remained on this track, his regime would not have been much different from many developmental dictatorships that sprang up in Latin America or in South East Asia in the second half of the twentieth century. But he did not. Because national economic development was not an aim in itself for Mussolini, it was only a means. It was a means of preparation for wars of conquest in the Balkans and in North Africa. In 1934 he announced the transformation of Italy into a *nazione militarista* and a *nazione guerriera* and prepared for expeditions abroad. According to Nolte, “The fact that Fascism was first a developmental dictatorship should not lead us to neglect that from the beginning its most intimate, and even not secret, drive was *directed towards war*.”¹¹ The aim of Italian Fascism was not to be a developmental dictatorship, but to be an *Eroberungsdespotie* (Nolte), a conquering dictatorship. This militarist character of fascism was not only directed against foreign governments that stood in the way of the imperial project. This militarism was double-edged: it was directed against two kinds of enemies. It was first and foremost directed against its political opponents within the country who were intimidated, physically attacked, and sometimes murdered by the paramilitary militias of the fascist parties. Michael Mann criticized Griffin’s definition because of his negligence of this aspect of fascism. “Griffin also sanitizes fascism,” he wrote, “remaining silent on its distinctively brutal violence and paramilitarism.”¹² Mann had a point: the use of violence is a characterizing feature of fascism, just as its imperialist drive. A same approach could be found in Philippe de Lara, who asked if fascism was characterized by a “primacy of violence” or a “primacy of ideology.”¹³ “The doctrine, the Nazi beliefs, are they the superficial envelope of a regime primarily characterized by a situation and a type of power, or, on the contrary, are they the heart of the matter? (...) [T]he Nazis did they believe in their myths?”¹⁴ De Lara concluded that there was a primacy of *both* ideology and violence.

A clear imperialist drive was already present in the “25 points”¹⁵ of the NSDAP program of 1920 that was formulated by Hitler and two colleagues. The first of these 25 points demanded “the union of all Germans in a Great Germany on the basis of the self-determination of the peoples.” The third point already formulated the famous demand for *Lebensraum* (living space): “We demand land and soil (colonies) to feed our people and to settle our population surplus.” Some years later Hitler would formulate this demand for *Lebensraum* in more detail in Chapter 14 of the second part of *Mein Kampf* where he indicated *where* the German people, “which is pressed together on

an impossible territory," could find the territories it needed to become a "world power." "When we speak today about new land and soil in Europe," he wrote, "then we can think in the first place about Russia and its dependent border states."¹⁶ This German imperial drive was not allowed to be hindered by international law or human rights, because, according to Hitler, "state frontiers are made by men and changed by men. The fact that a people has succeeded in the acquisition of an excessive territory does not imply a higher duty to eternally respect it. It proves only the power of the conquerors and the weakness of those who accept it. And only in this power resides right."¹⁷

The "national welfare" that the ultra-nationalist fascist regimes wanted to realize, was a very specific national welfare. The ultimate aim of the fascist leaders was neither the economic welfare, nor the cultural and scientific development of their countries, or even the happiness and the well-being of the citizens. Economic development and scientific progress were only a means. They were promoted in so far as they were instrumental to the military war effort, necessary for empire building. This innate, unlimited drive of the Nazi regime for imperial expansion was analyzed with great foresight by Franz Borkenau. In his book *The New German Empire*, published only four months before the outbreak of the Second World War, he wrote the following—almost prophetic—passage: "Hitler continues the policy of the Kaiser, and if he has his way, one of these years will be a new 1914. But he couples the imperialism of the Second Reich with a worldwide campaign for a new revolutionary faith which, by its very character, cannot accept the co-existence of any other faith in the world. The implication in this case, as in the case of the French Revolution, is a *disappearance of all rational limits to expansion*."¹⁸

The three sources of the fascist imperialist drive

This imperial drive which is characteristic of fascist regimes, is fed by three sources:

- programmatic
- psychological
- systemic

The imperial drive is programmatic in so far as the imperial ambitions were written in the agendas of the fascist movements. It is psychological, in so far as imperial ambitions were the main motivating force of the fascist leaders, which led to the choices they made in foreign policy. It is systemic, because fascist regimes tend to be driven by an internal

dynamic that inevitably leads to imperialist policies. The source of this internal dynamic consists of the enormous tensions that are built up in societies that live under the authoritarian and totalitarian rule of fascist dictatorships, which suppress individual freedoms and forbid the public expression of dissenting opinions. One way for the leadership to handle these tensions is to channel the hatred and aggression toward groups within the country that are turned into scapegoats, such as national minorities, Jews, socialists, communists, homosexuals, gypsies, and so on. But this kind of outlet has its limits, because not all citizens are happy with the persecution of innocent people. Therefore a second, and more important outlet, used by the regime, consists in channeling the aggression toward foreign enemies. Each time an imperialist war of conquest is crowned with success, this leads to jubilant outbursts of popular enthusiasm, binding the people more closely to its leader. Mussolini's popularity was never greater than after the conquest of Abyssinia (present-day Ethiopia), when he proclaimed the Second Roman Empire from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia in Rome. The same was true for Hitler after the *Anschluss* with Austria and the incorporation of the Sudetenland into the German Reich. As far as Mussolini's psychological drive was concerned: Antonio Gramsci, a communist, who was imprisoned by Mussolini, quoted a conservative Catholic publication, the *Correspondent* of July 25, 1927, in which was written that "the Duce (...) would have wanted to go to war already twice after coming to power: two times Marshall Badoglio would have refused to take the responsibility and would have asked and succeeded to wait until 1935 to be secure."¹⁹ This meant that already by 1927 Mussolini had developed his aggressive war plans. The same is true for Hitler. According to Georg Lukács, "this theory of the fascist Lebensraum is the foundation of the criminal attack of Hitler's Germany on the Soviet Union. From Hitler's "Mein Kampf" [it] is clear that this plan was from the beginning the basis of the fascist movement."²⁰

This threefold programmatic, psychological and systemic drive for imperial conquest is an important—and, in my opinion, essential—feature of fascist regimes. We can even state that even when it is not programmatic (the fascist leader can have good reasons to hide his intentions), the drive will be, most of the time, psychological, and always systemic. This systemic character of the fascist imperial drive was already analyzed by Franz Borkenau, who wrote:

Hitlerism was the outcome of tremendous stresses in a situation of political stalemate, and of the reaction of the masses against it. The

Nazi regime, by suppressing the right of organization and of free expression, has prevented these stresses from expressing themselves in the ordinary forms of political fights. But those stresses, those economic difficulties and sufferings, those sectional interests and antagonisms, have not been wiped out by the advent of Nazi-ism [sic]. They have only been bottled up without any normal outlet. (...) Germany to-day is a boiling cauldron without a safety valve. The regime itself in its need of finding miraculous cures (...) has augmented the tension. And the only question is in which direction the bomb will explode. This is the only thing the regime in all its apparent strength can really attempt to control. For explosion must be. A prophetic regime cannot in the long run allow its following to realize that life is just as drab or even drabber than it has ever been. As the Nazis have no real definite programme, they can more or less freely chose the direction of the tornado they started. *They may attack any section of their own people or any suitable adversary in the foreign field.*²¹

And he continued:

But of course no such attack, however ruthless and however successful, will be able finally to solve the problem. Therefore the attack is inevitably turned alternately upon every available object. There exists a definite connection between the measure of tension inside Germany and the aggressiveness of the regime both at home and abroad. *Aggression at home and aggression abroad can work as substitutes for one another. But there can never be an end to aggression as a whole because it is not determined by any real grievance but by the prophetic character of the regime and the tension which this very character is creating inside the country.*²²

This same mechanism can equally be observed in post-1945 fascist or fascistoid regimes. In 1974, for instance, the Greek junta conducted an aggressive policy of *enosis*—a Greek version of Hitler's *Anschluss* policy—when it engineered a coup d'état in Cyprus in order to incorporate the Greek Cypriots into Greece. And in 1982 the Argentine junta annexed the British Falkland Islands. Aggressive annexation policies are natural for fascist regimes, because apart from realizing the objectives of the leaders, they are an important means of reducing internal tension and an instrument to forge a national consensus. This inherent aggressive and bellicose drive with a total neglect of international law

is an essential characteristic of fascist regimes and should be included in a definition of generic fascism. I propose, therefore, the following amended version of Griffin's definition of a "fascist minimum" (with my amendments in italics):

Fascism is a genus of *authoritarian* political ideology whose mythical core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism *which permits the use of violence against its (supposed and real) opponents and contains an imperial project.*

Aggression as a means of internal tension reduction is, of course, not restricted to fascist regimes, but has equally been used by other, "conventional" authoritarian or autocratic regimes. Marx, for instance, already recognized this mechanism of reducing internal tension in the expansionist policies of nineteenth-century tsarist Russia, when he wrote: "'The benign tsar' considers therefore the war of conquest and the conduct of the traditional foreign policy of Russia that is 'unchangeable' (...) the only means to postpone the revolution inside [Russia]."²³ The difference with fascist regimes is that for the latter wars of conquest are essential.

The omnipresence of war in fascist ideology and praxis

For the fascists of the inter-war period, war was more than only a means of imperialist conquest. In fascist ideology and praxis, war was omnipresent and multifunctional. War played a central role on at least five levels:

- as an event
- as an attitude
- as a source of recruitment
- as a means
- as an ideology

War as an event

War as an event was the First World War. The two fascist regimes of the inter-war era were both direct products of the First World War. One could almost even say that they were the incarnations of this war. They were both born in the war and the war was the cradle, the incubator of both movements.

War as an attitude

If the First World War was fascism's alpha, "war in general" was its omega: it was its end and its ultimate reference point, as the needle of a compass always points to the north. Both regimes were the heralds and standard bearers of war. They cultivated the spirit of war until the very last days of their existence, when, finally, the war which they had inflicted on the world, turned itself against its instigators. "War" was not only a rational means in the Clausewitzian sense of the term: a calculated method to realize certain political and strategic goals. War was more. It was an attitude. It was almost an end in itself. War was glorified because it strengthened men's moral qualities, exemplified by the comradeship, discipline and mutual solidarity of the soldiers at the front. In this sense, for instance, war was already glorified before the First World War by the Futurist Filippo Marinetti, whose movement would become one of the pillars of Mussolini's regime. In his Futurist Manifesto of 1909 we find the following phrases: "1. We want to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and rashness. 3. (...) [W]e want to exalt movements of aggression, feverish sleeplessness, the forced march, the perilous leap, the slap and the blow with the fist (...). 9. We want to glorify war—the only cure for the world—and militarism, patriotism, the destructive gestures of anarchists, the beautiful ideas which kill, and contempt for women."²⁴ The same Marinetti wrote in 1914, "the present war (...) the most beautiful Futurist poem [sic] which has so far been seen. (...) The war will rejuvenate Italy, will enrich her with men of action."²⁵ In 1922, the Fascist deputy Luigi Federzoni, who would later become Mussolini's Minister of the Interior, in a speech in the Italian Chamber of Deputies, praised "the regenerating properties of war."²⁶ Another leading Fascist, Roberto Farinacci, called the war "the midwife of the new Italian people,"²⁷ and Alfredo Rocco, who would become Mussolini's Minister of Justice, wrote in 1919: "Italy [is] now purified and renewed by the war."²⁸ This idea, that the war would mold together the people of the recently unified nation, could also be found in Germany. Georg Simmel, an analytical thinker, who could not be suspected of being a proto-fascist, said in a lecture in November 1914: "that only with this war our *people* for the first time has become a unity and totality."²⁹ Simmel went on to say that he had the feeling "that this war in a way had another significance than wars otherwise have, that it has, as I might say, a mysterious internal side." This "mysterious internal side" was for him the coming of an ideal "new man," for the emergence of whom "this war has opened wide the doors that otherwise would

have remained closed for a long time.”³⁰ According to Ernst Nolte, “for National Socialism, just as for Fascism, the war and its affirmation was the real background.”³¹ Nolte compared the mythical role of the war for the fascists with the mythical role of the revolution for the Marxists. If “revolution” was the mythical demiurge of a new world order for the communists, the fascists regarded “war” as the equivalent.³² Both movements were fascinated and attracted by the legitimization of violence by their respective ideologies. Nolte wrote: “wars [were] for Hitler the revolutions of healthy peoples. Therefore he calls war “the strongest and most classical form of life.” And he thinks it characteristic for his epoch that “the horoscope of time does not indicate peace, but war.” Already in an early stage, affirmation of war was natural for Hitler; he did not need to learn it like Mussolini. Already as a boy, he tells in *Mein Kampf*, he has cursed his destiny which had let him being born in an epoch of peace.”³³ A similar celebration of war as a supreme purifying act can also be found in a precursor of modern fascism, Joseph de Maistre, who wrote in *The Saint Petersburg Dialogues*: “The whole earth, continually steeped in blood, is nothing but an immense altar on which every living thing must be sacrificed without end, without restraint, without respite until the consummation of the world, the extinction of evil, the death of death.”³⁴ Adding, “War is thus divine in itself, since it is a law of the world. (...) War is divine in the mysterious glory that surrounds it and in the no less inexplicable attraction that draws us to it.”³⁵

War as a source of recruitment

Mussolini not only replaced the socialist revolution by another violent event, war. In addition, he formulated his own kind of avant-garde theory, inspired by Lenin’s concept of the avant-garde role of the Communist Party.³⁶ Mussolini’s avant-garde consisted not of Lenin’s professional revolutionaries, but of the *trincerocrazia*, (trenchocracy), as he called them: the war veterans who had fought in the muddy trenches of the First World War. Because they had risked their lives, they had more than anybody else the right to define the future of their country. This was the reason that Mussolini developed a double-track strategy. In the program of his first fascist organization, the *Fascio di combattimento*, of March 23, 1919, demands were formulated to extend the suffrage to women and to lower the voting age to 18. These demands fitted completely into the post-First World War movement to establish a modern mass parliamentary democracy.

But at the same time the *fasci di combattimento*, mainly composed of war veterans, used extra-parliamentary violence against opponents to

attain their goals. Hitler modeled the SA along the same lines. The First World War had, therefore, still an additional function: it was a source of recruitment for the party militias. In his prescient and brilliant book *Fascism and the New Freedom*, published in 1939, the Dutch socialist theorist Jacques de Kadt, interestingly, called German national socialism a soldiers' rebellion. "German national socialism," he wrote, "is a *soldiers' rebellion*, on the one hand directed against the non-military population, on the other hand against the old military leaders, against the officers class."³⁷ He spoke in this context about *kazernisme* (a "military barracks mentality"): "the longing for a military barracks state, a military barracks community and a military barracks belief."³⁸ Therefore, "the world order cannot be otherwise than an absolutization of the military barracks order."³⁹ According to him this was not a German specificity, but a fascist specificity, because although "Italian nationalism was much more moderate than its German equivalent [and] there did not exist a 'military barracks mentality' in Italy, nevertheless fascism came into power and has made of Italy a pathological nationalistic barracks state, only some degrees less than Germany."⁴⁰

War as a means

War retained, of course, in fascism its role of a means in the Clausewitzian sense: a prolongation of diplomacy in the service of imperial conquest. Military build-up, military modernization, and actual preparation for war were essential characteristics of the fascist regimes.⁴¹ However, war was not only considered as a means for conquest. It was also considered a means to forge national unity. This was not a new phenomenon. Reinhart Koselleck wrote that already "during the time of absolutist and national state policies, war was understood as a relief process [to prevent] imminent civil wars."⁴² Koselleck used a negative formulation: preventing civil war. But there also was a positive formulation: Mussolini in particular thought that a shared war experience was a means to unify the people of the recently founded Italian state which had very diverse populations, many of whom did even not speak the Italian language.

War as an ideology

The celebration of war found its way in the fascist ideology. Imperialist wars were legitimated by a newly forged imperialist theory in which the Marxist theory of the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was applied to international relations. This theory was developed by Enrico Corradini, the co-founder of the Italian Nationalist

Association ANI which would merge with Mussolini's movement in 1923. According to Corradini there was "an imperialism of the poor" and an "imperialism of the rich." The wealthy established imperial powers, such as France and Britain, but equally Belgium, Portugal and the Netherlands, had divided the world between themselves and prevented the new, young, "proletarian" nations (Germany and Italy) to find a rightful place in the sun. "'Have' and 'have-not' nations competed for economic advantage in perpetual war—sometimes cold war, sometimes hot war. Since the workers of a rich country did share in their nation's wealth, international proletarian solidarity was a sham, a doctrine which served the plutocratic nations by helping to keep proletarian nations like Italy along class lines."⁴³ This new imperialist theory did not only legitimate fascist wars of conquest, but offered an alternative to Marxist class theories. First, it would end the class struggle within the country, because the young proletarians would serve as soldiers together with conscripts from other classes, which would mold them together to *one* people.⁴⁴ Second, the newly conquered territories would be populated by colonists from the working classes, which would open up new opportunities for these groups and diminish class tensions at home.⁴⁵

7

Defining Fascism: The “Thick” Method

The four dimensions of the ideal type

It is now time to turn to the second approach to analyze fascist systems: the ideal type. This heuristical device, developed by the sociologist Max Weber, consists of bringing together a maximum number of properties that can be found in fascist systems. When we have an ideal type it is possible to compare a given system—in our case, Putinism—with this ideal type. Emilio Gentile can be recognized for having identified a number of central elements that can be used for the construction of such an ideal type. I will partially follow Gentile’s approach¹ distinguishing four dimensions:

- organizational
- cultural
- ideological
- institutional

A political party with young middle-class leaders and its own party militia

Concerning the organizational dimension we find:

The presence of a mass movement of mixed class origin, in the leadership of which young people from a middle class background are overrepresented.

Mussolini’s PNF (Partito Nazionale Fascista) and Hitler’s NSDAP started as small groups that developed into mass movements. This mass

character was a consequence of the modernization of the political system in both countries after the First World War. In Italy universal suffrage, which in 1912 had still been limited to male voters over the age of 30, was extended to male voters aged 21 and over. Bismarck had introduced universal suffrage for males of 25 years in the North German Confederation in 1867. In the Weimar Republic the voting age was lowered to 20 years and women were also given the right to vote. In both countries this had suddenly enfranchised a young, new generation which was highly politicized as a result of the First World War. The older, established parties had mainly reflected class: workers voted for the left-wing parties and the bourgeoisie for the liberal parties. The PNF and the NSDAP, on the other hand, succeeded in attracting the votes of different strata of society.² In the leadership of both parties, young, middle-class people were overrepresented. Young people were not only attracted to these parties because they were new, but because the ideology of both parties celebrated youth, action, vigor, and health as the new national virtues.

This movement takes on the form of a political party with its own party-militia.

Both the Italian Fascists and the German Nazis followed a double strategy: they organized themselves in political parties that participated in parliamentary elections in the context of a liberal democracy.³ In parliament, they used a parliamentary strategy, seeking the support of the old elites and making compromises with other leading groups in order to create a new regime and abolish parliamentary democracy. At the same time they organized an extra-parliamentary opposition for which they created special militias: in Italy the blackshirts, in Germany the SA (*Sturmabteilung*).⁴ These militias, proletarian squads mostly consisting of war veterans and unemployed workers, terrorized political adversaries with violent actions which included physical attacks and murders. According to Stefan Breuer, "For Italy the official statistics of violent acts for the year 1920 and the first half year of 1921 give a number of almost five hundred dead and over two thousand wounded, for Prussia the numbers are in 1931/32 190 dead and almost 10,000 wounded."⁵ These numbers, taken from a period just before both parties came into power, give an impression of the violent climate of intimidation that had been created by this double strategy.

A mythical political religion emphasizing virility and the leader principle

As concerns the cultural dimension we find:

A culture based on mythical and mystical thinking, characterized by some as a “political religion,” in which a tragic sense of life and personal sacrifice played a big role. Fascist values, such as virility and military strength and the leader principle were celebrated and inculcated during highly symbolic events.

Eric Voegelin was one of the first to call the fascist regimes political religions. In April 1938, one month after the *Anschluss*—Austria’s incorporation into the German Reich—he published a book with the same title in Vienna.⁶ Voegelin saw a direct link between the process of secularization and the emergence of these new political movements. Religious feelings and expectations were transferred from the realm of religion to the realm of politics. The creation of new myths was instrumental in this development. According to him, “the myth is constructed on purpose in order to emotionally bind the masses and to bring them in a situation in which they expect salvation which is politically effective.”⁷ This interpretation was criticized by Peter Sloterdijk, who wrote “that often especially smart analysts aren’t capable of letting hollow subjects remain as hollow as they are. (...) These interpretations mirror the vanity of the analyst, who does not want to speak about less than a religion. From the addition of racists’ stupidity, bureaucrats’ stupidity and soldiers’ stupidity does not in the least result a religious phenomenon.”⁸ Sloterdijk considered “the impulsive pseudo-metaphysical over-interpretation of fascism a symptom of how difficult it is for many commentators to understand the total senselessness of the banality of evil that was analyzed by Hannah Arendt.”⁹ According to Sloterdijk youth camp rituals and midsummer feasts could, indeed, be misinterpreted by the participants as religion, “but such rituals have no more spiritual weight than, let’s say, the opening ceremonies of a sports festival or the session of a carnival club.”¹⁰

Sloterdijk’s criticism, although not completely unfounded, missed, however, one important point and that was that the use of myths and mysticism in fascism had two sides: a supply and a demand side. He is certainly right when he emphasizes that the fascist creators of myth (the supply side) were mainly inspired by a cold, cynical will to manipulate

the masses.¹¹ The same, however, cannot be said of the demand side: the population. Many citizens experienced quasi-religious feelings of devotion toward their leaders.¹² This ambiguous, double character of the fascist mysticism as a mixture of outright fake and real, (although secularized) mysticism was already observed by Franz Borkenau in 1939, when he wrote that “the present German Revolution will inevitably appear half a mystical and half a meaningless event. A mystical undercurrent, a belief in the coming of the millennium can certainly be traced in every revolution and usually provides justification for all the horrors which are bound up with it. But in the case of Germany this quasi-religious fanaticism has swallowed up every concrete and well-defined aim. (...) the claim of a supernatural mission, however vaguely defined, works as an endorsement for the disregard of ordinary morals.”¹³

The myth in the case of Germany was a reference to a pre-Christian Germanic past and the advent of a Thousand Year Reich. In the case of Italy, it was a reference to the Roman empire and its imminent reincarnation in a new Afro-Mediterranean empire led by Italy. Because these efforts to restore national greatness demanded sacrifices from the population, projects were initiated to transform and re-educate the citizens in order to make them totally subservient to the state. Both regimes celebrated the virtues of these “new men,” needed by the empire. They would be virile, full of vigor and youthful strength, permanently prepared for action. In the German case was added the condition of a pure, “Nordic”, racial purity. Military virtues were coupled with a deep contempt of the weak and the fragile.¹⁴ During massive popular rallies, demonstrations, marches, and evening parades with torches (*Fackelzüge*) a quasi-religious symbolism was expressed. Part of this symbolism was also the typical fascist greeting with an outstretched right arm—in Italy called the *saluto romano*, in Germany the *Deutsche Gruß* (or Hitler salute)—which was first used as an expression of group identity by the adherents themselves. After Hitler came to power, it was imposed on the German population as a whole,¹⁵ initially as a means to distinguish friend and foe, and ultimately as a means to control civil society.¹⁶ The inculcation of fascist values was further promoted by the militarization of politics, first by introducing uniforms for party militias (brown shirts in Germany, black shirts in Italy), and later by paramilitary exercises for members of the youth movements and members of sports and student organizations.

Ultra-nationalism, racism, and the restoration of national greatness

As concerns the ideological dimension, we find:

An ideology that starts as a mixture of ultra-nationalism, putschism, and authoritarianism which takes in the beginning the form of an anti-ideology, but that after its seizure of state power elaborates post-hoc some positive principles for the organization of the state, civil society, and the economy. These include the establishment of a one-party state, in which there exists a symbiosis between party and state and the state becomes an autonomous source of power, intervening directly in the economy. In its ideology is formulated the necessity of conducting an aggressive foreign policy aimed at the "restoration of national greatness." An officially proclaimed racism, directed against "alien" or "impure" elements that are a danger for the "national organism," becomes an essential element of the fascist creed.

Both Italian Fascism and German Nazism were ultra-nationalist. Both movements started also as putschist movements. Mussolini's March on Rome in October 1922 was in fact a putsch attempt. Because of the division of the democratic parties, it led to his nomination as prime minister. Hitler was less successful with his aborted Munich Beer Hall Putsch in November 1923 (for which he was imprisoned in Landsberg jail). This early debacle must have convinced him to pursue, like Mussolini, a double strategy of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary action. In the beginning, their respective ideologies were pre-eminently anti-ideologies: formulated in negative terms as anti-democracy, anti-liberalism, anti-Marxism, anti-socialism,¹⁷ anti-religion, anti-Semitism, anti-egalitarianism, and anti-human rights. This character of fascism as an anti-ideology is openly admitted by Mussolini and Gentile in their article on the doctrine of Fascism, where the authors wrote that Fascism became an autonomous doctrine "in a confrontation with all the other (doctrines), contemporary, as well as historical." It is, therefore, no surprise that one can read in this article that Fascism is against liberalism (five times), against democracy (six times), against socialism (four times), against trade-unionism (two times), against individualism (two times), and further against bolshevism, parliamentarianism, assemblies, free-masons, pacifism, egalitarianism, (other) political parties, economic welfare, and theories of progress. It must be noted, however, that the

word “anti-Semitic” does not yet figure in this text. However, when the movements became political parties and established themselves in the political landscape, positive program points also had to be formulated. These positive program points included the leader principle, a veneration of a strong state, an imperialist and aggressive foreign policy, and economic corporatism in which trade unions and employers’ organizations came under the aegis of the state (Italy), or had to merge (Germany).¹⁸

As concerns the official racism of both regimes, a difference has often (rightly) been made between the more moderate racism of Italian Fascism and the virulent, psychopathological racism of the Nazi regime. Italian Fascism, however, might have been less anti-Semitic than German Nazism, but it certainly also had its own variant of racism, especially vis-à-vis black Africans. Take for example the genocidal colonial war of conquest in Abyssinia, in which tens of thousands of civilians were killed by mustard gas. Mussolini’s low-key anti-Semitism has sometimes been explained by the fact that he had a Jewish mistress, Margherita Sarfatti. We must also not forget that, in 1938, when the racial laws were enacted, one-third of Italian Jewish adults was a member of the Fascist party. It is telling that Mussolini “in 1933 (...) was listed by American Jewish publishers among the world’s “twelve greatest Christian champions” of the Jews.”¹⁹ Aaron Gillette asked therefore: “Given Mussolini’s public antipathy towards racism in the early 1930s, why did he decide to inject it full force into Italian society in July 1938?”²⁰ Was it “a largely artificial creation of the Italo-German alliance” as some authors claimed? Gillette does not agree and sees—rightly—the roots elsewhere: “Probably the idea to single out Jews for racist attack was an extension of Mussolini’s long-existing anti-Africanism (...). As the invasion of Abyssinia neared, Mussolini became obsessed with an anxiety over instances of miscegenation between Italians and Africans, producing mixed-race children.”²¹ The Italian racial law of 1938 found a predecessor in the decree of August 5, 1936, issued for Italian East Africa (which included the newly conquered Abyssinia) in which *madamismo* (concubines) and *sciarmuttismo* (mixed-race children) were strictly forbidden. Earlier indications of Mussolini’s anti-black (and anti-Asian) prejudices can be found in the preface he wrote in 1928 for a book by the German Nazi demographer Richard Korherr, in which he expressed his fear that “the whole White race, the Western race can be submerged by other coloured races which are multiplying at a rate unknown in our race. Are the black and yellow races at the gates, then? Yes, they are at the gates.”²² A new light was thrown on the question of Mussolini’s racism when, on November 19, 2009,

the diaries of Claretta Petacci, his last mistress, were published in Italy. Petacci quoted Mussolini on August 4, 1938, 20 days after the enactment of the racial laws, when the *Duce* would have said: "I am a racist since 1921. I don't know how they can think that I imitate Hitler, he was even not born [sic]. They make me laugh. (...) We need to give the Italians a sense of race, so that they don't make mestizos." And on August 28, 1938, Mussolini said: "Each time that I receive the report from Africa I am vexed. Today there were five arrested because they live together with negro women (...) Ah! These Italians, they destroy an empire in less than six years."²³

The symbiosis of party and state, corporatism, totalitarian control and an imperialist foreign policy

Under the institutional dimension (the institutions, instruments, and policies through which the ideological aims of the movement are realized), we can distinguish:

The establishment of a one-party state, in which the state becomes an autonomous source of power and in which exists a symbiosis between the state and the party. The state imposes a corporatist order, intervenes directly in the economy, and strives for a totalitarian control of civil society. Externally, the state conducts an aggressive and annexationist imperialist foreign policy.

In both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany political pluralism was repressed and substituted by a one-party system. This did not mean, however, as was argued by Marxists, that the fascist state was just an instrument of the capitalist interests. On the contrary, in Italy, as well as in Germany the state became a source of autonomous power—not only vis-à-vis the working classes, but also vis-à-vis the capitalist class, even if it did not touch the property rights of this class.²⁴ There existed a symbiosis between the party and the state. But between Italy and Germany there was a difference concerning the balance of power within this symbiotic relationship between party and state. In Italy there existed a clear preponderance of the state, while in Germany the state was subservient to the party, especially to its leader Adolf Hitler.²⁵ In fact, there existed in the state a double structure: normal laws were still applied, but these could at each moment be overruled by a *Führererlaß*, a decree of the Führer.²⁶ The state did not recognize different social classes, but only one, "organic" people. Organizations

that represented specific class interests (trade unions, employers' organizations) were replaced by corporatist bodies.

As concerns the question of the totalitarian character of both regimes, it is a received idea that Italy was not totalitarian and that a totalitarian control of civil society only existed in Nazi Germany. Although Mussolini never succeeded in imposing his regime with the same rigor as Hitler did—due to the existence of remaining countervailing powers, such as the king, the Catholic Church, the army, and even the Grand Council of Fascists that he himself had created—his attempts to strengthen his control of the country reached an apogee after the conquest of Abyssinia and the establishment of the Italian Empire in 1936. Emilio Gentile considered that a “totalitarian” acceleration²⁷ took place in Italy between February and November 1938. It was the period in which the regime enacted its first official racist law. The somewhat false opinion that Fascist Italy was not a totalitarian state had been formulated by Hannah Arendt, who defended it in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,²⁸ published in 1951. This book played an important role in shaping the opinion of the international scientific community after the war.

However, if we look at the four criteria, developed by Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski in their book *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*,²⁹ in order to distinguish if a political system can be labeled “totalitarian,” another image emerges. The authors formulate four criteria, which include the presence of a one-party system, the presence of an ideology with a messianic vision, a monopoly of the communication media, and the presence of a terroristic secret police that not only attacks enemies of the regime, but equally randomly selected groups. According to Dante Germino³⁰ Fascist Italy fulfilled the first three of these four criteria, but not the fourth concerning totalitarian terror. (Later also this fourth criterion would be fulfilled in Mussolini's last stronghold, the Salò Republic in Northern Italy, between September 1943 and April 1945, where the Jews were persecuted. But we have to take into account that the Salò Republic was a puppet regime of the Nazis). Germino rightly observed that “Totalitarianism is not so much an accomplished fact, as a process of becoming. Fascist Italy came not so near to the totalitarian telos as Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. But the strange men who ruled Italy never lost sight of the totalitarian goal. Only the circumstances prevented the maturation of monstrous projects that were already in essence present in the fertile brains of the fascist leaders. (...) In the peculiar twenty years of its existence the Italian fascist dictatorship developed itself irresistibly towards the totalitarian example.”³¹

Both regimes also initiated aggressive foreign policies with the objective of “restoring national greatness,” without consideration of the rules of international law, leading to wars of aggression. The case of Germany is well known. It is often forgotten, however, how many bloody wars have been fought by Mussolini’s Italy which is considered less totalitarian and sometimes even the “good guy” of the two fascist regimes of the inter-war era. In 2003, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi said in an interview that “Mussolini never killed anyone. Mussolini used to send people on vacation in internal exile.”³² This association of Italian Fascism with “holidays” was already popular in Mussolini’s time. Bosworth, for instance, wrote: “Joining the invasion [of Abyssinia], young Fascist intellectual Indro Montanelli maintained more carelessly, was the equivalent of a long holiday, granted by Santa Claus in compensation for the tedium of being stuck at a school desk for thirteen years.”³³ Italy, however, not only annexed Albania and attacked Greece, but in its wars in Libya and Ethiopia it used forbidden poison gas against civilian populations which led to accusations of genocide and ethnic cleansing. “Ethiopian historians estimate the total dead from Italian wars and governmental actions (...) even well above 300,000,” wrote Bosworth.³⁴ As far as Libya was concerned, the ethnic cleansing in that country is reflected in the decline of Libya’s native population during Italian rule: “from 1.4 million in 1907, to 1.2 in 1912, 1.1 in 1915, 1.0 in 1921, 850,000 in 1930, and 825,000 in 1933. Some of this loss may be explained by internecine killing and by nomads finding sanctuary in the French and British Empire across the border. But in no circumstances can the tally suggest that Italy, under either Liberal or Fascist flag, ruled Libya benignly.”³⁵

Discussion

If we look at the list of characteristics that are assembled above under the four headings: organization, culture, ideology, and institutions—a list that does not claim to be complete or exhaustive—then it is clear that neither Mussolini’s Italy, nor Nazi Germany share all of them, and when they share them, they do so in a different way or in a different proportion. Italian Fascism was much less virulently anti-Semitic than its German counterpart: open, official racism was almost totally absent in the first 14 years of Mussolini’s rule. Mussolini’s *statismo* held the Fascist party and its leaders at a safe distance from executive state power, a situation that was very different from the important role that the NSDAP played in Nazi Germany. Totalitarian terror and totalitarian

control of civil society were much more complete in Nazi Germany. Another difference concerns the scale of both countries' imperial drive. It was almost unlimited in the case of Nazi Germany and it did not hesitate to aim for world domination. It was limited as far as Italy was concerned because it aimed to build "only" a regional, Mediterranean empire. These differences in the imperial ambitions of both countries were, of course, directly related to their relative military strength and the history of their respective successes and defeats on the battlefield. Despite these differences, both regimes are regarded as fully fledged fascist regimes. This means that if we compare both regimes with the yardstick of the ideal type they are considered to be close enough to this ideal type to be labeled "fascist."

8

Putinism and Fascism: The 11 Differences (Part I)

The 11 differences: An introduction

The question we have asked ourselves in the preceding chapters was whether Russia was developing into a fascist country. In the first part of this book we have analyzed the parallels between the situation in post-Soviet Russia and the Weimar Republic. Having analyzed 23 items, brought together under five dimensions, we came to the conclusion that the parallels were, indeed, striking. We also emphasized that this “Weimar Parallel” did not imply some kind of historical fate, predicting the inevitable establishment in Russia of a regime similar to that of Germany or Italy in the 1930s. Present-day Russia is another country with a different history, different actors, and different traditions. However, the fact that contemporary Russia shares two important characteristics with post-First World War Germany is a matter of concern. These two characteristics are, first, a lack of experience of democratic governance and, second, the sudden introduction of the institutions and procedures of a modern electoral mass democracy. From the literature on the subject (e.g. Samuel Huntington and Jack Snyder) it is known that these two characteristics generally predict political turmoil, violent power struggles, and praetorianism. The turmoil of Weimar Germany ended with the advent of Adolf Hitler and National Socialism. The turmoil of post-First World War Italy ended with the advent of Mussolini and Italian Fascism. The turmoil of “Weimar Russia” ended with the advent of Vladimir Putin and “Putinism.” All three leaders promised to bring order, to reinvigorate and modernize the economy, and to restore the national prestige of a humiliated country. This is, however, in itself no sufficient reason to compare Putin’s system with the systems of the inter-war era, because—apart from these similarities—there are also

a number of important differences between present-day Russia and the systems of the inter-war era. There are at least 11 differences regarding:

1. the ascent to power of the leader
2. the role of the party
3. the “centrist” self-image of the presidential party
4. the absence in Russia of party militias
5. the presence in Russia of an official anti-fascist state ideology
6. the absence in Russia of state-sponsored racism
7. the absence in Russia of totalitarianism
8. the symbiotic relationship of the Russian state with the (Orthodox) Church
9. the character of Russia’s power elite
10. the role of mafias
11. the maintenance of a pluralistic democratic facade

Hereunder we will analyze these differences more in detail.

Taking power or receiving power? Putin’s successful infiltration strategy

The way in which Putin came to power is totally different from what happened in Germany and Italy in the inter-war era. Putin was neither the charismatic leader of a populist political party, who hypnotized the masses with his magnetic personality and his oratorical skills during highly emotional political rallies, nor did he gradually build up his support during election campaigns in which political rivals were harassed and attacked by a violent party militia. Putin was “the man who came in from the cold,” “the man who came from nowhere.” He was suddenly there, totally unexpected. And, even more important: he was seemingly alone, without a mass following. The fact was that Putin neither needed the support of a political party, nor of violent party militias that intimidated opponents, to reach the apex of power. Putin was appointed, not to say anointed, by the president of the country, Boris Yeltsin, who abdicated before the end of his term and put him on the throne. The way in which Putin came to power was neither Hitler’s *Machtergreifung*, his “seizure of power,”¹ nor Mussolini’s threatening march on Rome. It was rather a subtle process in which he gradually positioned himself and made himself indispensable for the *Semya* (“the Family”), the group of oligarchs and advisors around President Yeltsin and his daughter Tatyana. His rise to power was the result of a successful infiltration policy, a strategy of which

the KGB/FSB had 80 years of experience. In the last year of Yeltsin's presidency, when a sick and weakened Yeltsin had become a shadow of his earlier self, it was the FSB that called the shots in the Kremlin. The only real choice Yeltsin seemed to have had in the end was between Stepashin or Putin, who were *both* former FSB directors. Putin's ascent to power, therefore, was quite different from that of the fascist leaders of the inter-war era: it was not the result of a popular grassroots movement that, using the possibilities of the new mass democracy, rapidly grew in force in a process of bottom-up, but it was the result of a top-down pseudo-caesarist mini coup d'état by the Russian secret service. Putin did not enter the Kremlin from the street, borne along by the crowd, but arrived all alone by air, hanging from a parachute. This is not to say that Putin was groomed by the FSB to take Yeltsin's place. There were other, more senior and seemingly more qualified candidates, such as Primakov and Stepashin. In the end, Yeltsin's choice was the overriding factor.

A post-hoc role for a presidential political party

The first difference is related with the second. In the Italian and German examples, the party was the most important vehicle to conquer the state. In the Russian case, this was different. The need for his own political party came to Putin only post hoc. The Unity Party (*Yedinstvo*) was founded in September 1999, when Putin was already Prime Minister. This party obtained a good result in the Duma elections of December 1999 and secured Putin's election as president in March 2000. In July 2001 this party merged with Luzhkov's Fatherland-All Russia Party and was renamed United Russia (*Yedinaya Rossiya*). United Russia became Putin's new presidential party. Putin, however, was already president and needed a party, not to bring him to power, but to keep him in power.

The presidential party as a "centrist" party

The fascist parties of the inter-war era presented themselves as revolutionary parties which promised to build a completely new world order on the ruins of the "outlived" and "decadent" democracies. They were the transmission wheels of the conservative revolution, a counter-model of the socialist revolution. The Russian Presidential Party—first Unity, and later United Russia—had neither revolutionary goals, nor a revolutionary membership. After 1991, the word "revolution" had become obsolete. It was an anachronism that even Zyuganov's Communist Party no longer used. The Presidential Party defined itself

as a “center” party, in the middle of two extremes: the “ultra-left” communist party, and the “ultra-right” Liberal-Democratic Party headed by Zhirinovsky. The membership of the party reflected this “center” position: it consisted mainly of government bureaucrats, local and regional politicians, and *biznizmeny*. There were no revolutionaries to be found.

No party militias

The members of Putin’s party also felt no need to create a party militia to intimidate political opponents. All the levers of the coercive power of the state, the army, the police, and the secret services, were already concentrated in Putin’s hands. The party had its own youth movement, the Young Guards (*Molodaya Gvardiya*), but this was a rather tame organization of young careerists. The need for the Kremlin to build its own youth movement, the *Nashi* (Ours), came only later when it became clear that control over the repressive state organs was not sufficient to establish an effective control over civil society. The *Nashi* served a threefold goal: first, to create a conveyor belt to transmit the ideology of the Kremlin to the younger generation; second, to give the Kremlin a greater control over civil society; third, to defend Russia against “color revolutions.”

The Kremlin’s official “anti-fascism”

Another difference between Putinism and the systems of the inter-war era is even more important. Mussolini and his followers proudly called themselves Fascists. They even invented this neologism. Nazi Germany, although it considered itself to be superior, did not deny its *Verwandtschaft*, its congeniality with Mussolini’s Italy. In Putin’s Russia, however, the word “fascism” is taboo. Even the Eurasianist Aleksandr Dugin, who proudly claimed to be a fascist, thought it later more convenient to maintain a lower profile. “Anti-Fascism” is a part of the official ideology of the Russian state.

When the Russian leadership declares itself to be “anti-fascist,” Western observers might be inclined to suspect that behind this claim one can only find the naked cynicism of the Kremlin’s “polit-technologists.” But things are less simple. “Anti-fascism” has deep roots in the last 70 years of Russian history. The concept has to a large degree contributed to the construction of Russia’s self-image. It is important to note that the Russian word “anti-fascism” was coined by Stalin. In the

1930s, the term “fascist” was indiscriminately used to indicate enemies of the Soviet Union. Stalin had no interest in differentiating between democrats and fascists. He even went so far as to refer to Western social democrats—with whom the communists shared a common ideological and historical background—as “social fascists” with whom it was forbidden for communists to co-operate.² The meaning of “anti-fascism” in Soviet Russia was, therefore, indistinct from the very beginning. In the West “fascism” refers to the political systems of German Nazism and Italian Fascism. It refers to the abolition of parliamentary democracy, the installation of a dictatorship and the introduction of the *Führerprinzip*, and the persecution and murder of political opponents, racism and genocide, imperialism and extreme belligerence. In the West “anti-fascism” is synonymous with the struggle for democracy and human rights, the seeking of compromise and the peaceful solution of political conflicts.

It was never considered that Stalin’s regime would—and could—interpret “anti-fascism” as an equivalent of Western democracy. “Fascism” for Stalin’s regime was not a generic term that included German Nazism and Italian Fascism, nor did it refer to the political system of Nazi Germany. “Fascism” became just another name for the opponent. In the 1930s this was the capitalist world, including the social democrats. After Germany attacked the Soviet Union this opponent was Germany. During the “Great Patriotic War” “fascism” meant Germany and nothing else. “Anti-Fascism” became the general denominator under which everything and everybody was subsumed that fought against Germany and tried to stop the advance of its troops into Soviet territory. The vanguard of this heroic struggle against Germany was Soviet Russia. Just as “fascism” became synonymous with Germany, “anti-fascism” became virtually synonymous with Soviet Russia. The epithet “anti-fascist” merged with the word “Russia” to become almost³ one and the same.

However, the “anti-fascism” of Stalin’s Soviet Union was just a label given to the defense of one totalitarian system against another. It was mirrored in the way Nazi Germany transformed its attack on the Soviet Union into “a struggle against bolshevism.” The same Soviet Union that fought the war under the flag of “anti-fascism” had just experienced the most bloody decade of its existence. More than 11 million people died of hunger during the collectivization in what was a deliberate genocide,⁴ and millions had lost their lives in Stalin’s purges. These purges had also decimated the Red Army officer class, which was a decisive factor why the Red Army was unprepared at the beginning of the war.⁵ Stalin

was only able to mobilize the population by calling the war the “Great Patriotic War.” This war, in which millions lost their lives, was fought by the population as a war for their national survival. It was a heroic war and a huge tragedy for the Russian population who continued to suffer many years after.⁶ Nobody will, therefore, contest the important role that the Soviet Union played in the allied victory over Nazi Germany. However, this victory was a double edged sword: while enabling the restoration of democracy in Western Europe, it brought the countries of Eastern Europe under Stalin’s totalitarian yoke.

In the present situation of growing ultra-nationalism, the word “Russia” has acquired a much more emotional meaning for the majority of Russians than during Soviet times when Russia was a part of a wider federation. We can observe a parallel development for the word “anti-fascism.” “Anti-fascism,” which is now more closely linked with “Russia” than with “Soviet Union,” is much more emotionally loaded than before. Anti-fascism, for most Russians today, is not associated with a criticism of dictatorship and/or human rights violations, but with unique and unforgettable moments of sacrifice, heroism, national pride, and imperial grandeur. George Kennan wrote on the “Great Patriotic War” that “this is the sort of experience that surpasses the receptivity of a single generation, that enters into the subconscious mind of a nation, to become legend, folklore, tradition—to determine the reactions of people yet unborn.”⁷ Kennan had already written that Russians could not imagine that celebrating the feats and heroic acts of the great Russian nation could be something different from anti-fascism. In the present situation, therefore, in which Soviet patriotism has made way for *Russian ultra-nationalism*, anti-fascism is not understood as a criticism of the ugly, repressive sides of the existing political system in Russia. On the contrary, since 1945 anti-fascism is considered the inalienable historical legacy of the Russian nation that finds its expression in a powerful state. The celebration of Russia’s history and the glorification of the deeds of its heroes and great men and women have become an integral part of this anti-fascist tradition. The “Anti-Fa” (Anti-Fascism) group of the Nashi, for instance, has the task of upholding the respect for war veterans, and to take care of the monuments that commemorate the heroes who lost their lives in the “Great Patriotic War.” In this way, a historical narrative is constructed in which “anti-fascism,” “Great Patriotic War,” and contemporary national self-celebration are blended. This national self-celebration finds its logical conclusion in the present mood of ultra-nationalism. In a kind of Hegelian-Marxian dialectic, anti-fascism has changed into its opposite,

ultra-nationalism. Ultra-nationalism is, according to Robert Griffin's definition, one of the basic ingredients of fascism. A clear expression of this Nietzschean *Umwertung aller Werte*—a process in which values are transformed into their opposites—is the invective “demofascists” which is used in Russia to refer to members of the democratic opposition.⁸ In this perspective, we have also to understand the initiative of the Russian senator and pro-Putin oligarch Boris Shpigel, who in June 2010 founded in Kyiv an international movement called “World Without Nazism” (*Mir bez Natsizma*). According to a report of the Estonian Security Police, “Radical nationalists (...), who promote Russian chauvinism, represent Estonia in the World Without Nazism's management board.”⁹

The absence of state sponsored racism

The fascist regimes of the inter-war era were deeply racist. Both were based on the belief in the superiority of the “Germanic,” respectively the “Latin” race. But between the two there were big differences. First, the intensity of the racism was different: in Germany it occupied a central place and it reached hysterical, even obsessive and psychotic dimensions, while in Italy it remained in mainland Italy restricted to a more moderate and bureaucratic kind of racism that reserved its racist violence for the genocidal colonial wars of conquest in Libya and Abyssinia.¹⁰ Second, the focus of the racism in the two countries was different: in Germany the Jews were especially targeted, while in Italy it was the black Africans (Jews were targeted only later, under German pressure).¹¹

Contemporary Russia is a country plagued by racism. Hooligans and extremist groups are openly hunting and attacking dark-skinned people. Racist murders have become a routine. Asian and African students in Moscow and Saint Petersburg are warned not to walk alone in the street by night because they risk their lives. The police and the judiciary generally display a lenient attitude and are often unwilling to prosecute and punish the perpetrators. Until recently, the situation was continuously deteriorating. The worst years were 2007 and 2008, when 89 and 110 people were killed respectively. Since then, the Moscow SOVA Center, which monitors ultra-nationalist and racist hate crimes, observed a decrease in the violence (71 killed in 2009, 37 in 2010), due to improved investigation and prosecution.¹² But the racist climate is too widespread and too deeply rooted to be optimistic about recent successes of the law-enforcing agencies after years of *laissez-faire* in a country in which about 55 percent of the population agrees with the far-right slogan “Russia for the Russians.”

However, all this is a far cry from the state-sponsored racism of the regimes of the inter-war era. The Russian government does not propagate a racist ideology. Such state-sponsored racism would, indeed, open a Pandora's box inside the Russian Federation by promoting separatist tendencies in a country where about 20 percent of its population is not ethnic Russian. In January 2012, Putin referred in an article in the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* to ultra-nationalists who shout "Stop feeding the Caucasus" and who claim "racial purity" as "provocateurs." "What they really want in the end," he wrote, "is to make people destroy their homeland with their own hands."¹³ Official racism would further jeopardize the geopolitical goal of the Russian leadership: to re-establish the former empire on a new basis. Because this former empire not only includes the Slav republics, but also the non-Slav South Caucasus and Central Asian republics. The absence of state-sponsored racism, apart from being a question of principle, is therefore also a question of political prudence. This same prudence can be observed in the writings of Alexander Dugin, whose Eurasianist dreams can only be realized in a multicultural and interethnic setting (under Russian leadership).

However, this political prudence does not mean that individual members of the Russian leadership don't have racist gut feelings. Would Putin have made his vulgar remark that he would "wipe them [the terrorists] out in their toilets" (*mochit ikh v sortirakh*), if the terrorists had not been Chechens, but ethnic Russians? Also the indiscriminate bombings of Grozny in the winter of 1999, which left thousands of civilian victims, had clearly racist undertones. It is telling that many Russian extreme-right organizations, although often critical of the authorities, had a positive view of Putin.¹⁴ Another example of the Kremlin's hidden racism were the actions against Georgian citizens in 2006, when Georgian migrants living and working in Russia were deported, and even schools were asked to deliver lists of pupils with Georgian sounding names. There are other, disconcerting facts. During the trial in 2009 of the Nationalist Socialist Organization (NSO)—a racist skinhead gang which was accused of 27 murders—it emerged that its leader, Maksim Bazilev, had 200 million roubles (4.8 million euros) on his bank account. He paid the members of the gang each month a "salary" of 25,000 roubles (about 600 euros). Where did this money come from? Bazilev could not answer this question. He committed suicide in a cell of the Interior Ministry in Moscow, a building, however, known for its tight security measures. According to Charles Clover, Moscow correspondent of the *Financial Times*, the NSO had "numerous and not altogether transparent relationships with Russia's political and law-enforcement establishment."¹⁵

Another case is that of Aleksandr Belov, leader of the racist and now forbidden Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI), who, in November 2006, was photographed at a Kremlin soirée celebrating the “Day of Police.” And what could be thought of the racist skinheads of the Slavic Union (*Slavyansky Soyuz*, of which the abbreviation is SS) who, on March 31, 2010, stood behind ranks of police officers to break up an opposition rally? One of the skinheads was photographed wearing a badge identical to those worn by police officers. According to Aleksandr Verkhovsky, director of the SOVA Center, “there is clear evidence that in the past the authorities have encouraged and even directly supported ultra-nationalist groups.”¹⁶

When, in November 2011, a Russian pilot was sentenced in Tajikistan to eight and a half years on charges of smuggling and illegal border crossing, 1,500 Tajik migrants were arrested in Russia and brought to detention camps in order to be deported, which led to accusations of a politically and racially inspired manhunt.¹⁷ President Medvedev denied that this was the case.¹⁸ But the credibility of his denial was not enhanced when Russia’s chief state public health officer and deputy health minister, Gennady Onishchenko, pleaded for a total ban on migration from Tajikistan on the grounds that these migrants transmitted dangerous illnesses, including tuberculosis and HIV, among Russian citizens—an argument about “impure minorities” which evoked nasty reminiscences.

The absence of totalitarianism

Putin’s Russia is an authoritarian state. But even the staunchest critics of Putin have to admit that today’s Russia is a far cry from Stalin’s totalitarian Soviet Union and that the personal freedom enjoyed by the Russian citizens is much greater than during Brezhnev’s “soft” totalitarianism. “Authoritarianism,” wrote Ralf Dahrendorf, “is not totalitarianism. Totalitarian regimes are based on the permanent mobilization of everybody in order to strengthen a violent regime. An authoritarian regime, on the contrary lives from the apathy of the citizens who pursue their own “private” interests, while a nomenklatura has changed the public interest into that of their own preservation of power.”¹⁹ Russians living in Putin’s authoritarian “sovereign democracy” apparently do not suffer much and especially the middle classes, who are able to travel abroad and buy the same luxury goods as their Western neighbors, seem to indulge in their new, consumerist lifestyle. For these middle classes, Putin represents order and stability and a reasonable, sustainable

measure of economic growth. Putin, in short, is for them the figure of the “good despot.” Dahrendorf already mentioned the reverse side of such a system for the politically disempowered citizens: their apathy. Also John Stuart Mill warned: “A good despotism is an altogether false ideal, which practically (except as a means to some temporary purpose) becomes the most senseless and dangerous of chimeras.”²⁰ And he went on: “a good despotism (...) is more noxious than a bad one; for it is far more relaxing and enervating to the thoughts, feelings, and energies of the people.”²¹ “All the thinking that has relations to collective interests [is] done for them (...) [T]he intelligence and sentiments of the whole people are given up to the material interests, and when these are provided for, to the amusement and ornamentation, of private life.”²² Mill considered a “good despotism,” to be one which gave people freedom to gratify their consumption needs, but this was debasing for the citizens. There are several reasons for this. “Nor is it only in their intelligence that they suffer,” he wrote. “Their moral capacities are equally stunted. Wherever the sphere of action of human beings is circumscribed, their sentiments are narrowed and diminished in the same proportion.”²³

Under Putin, Russia has evolved into an authoritarian state that has destroyed the hope of the Gorbachev and early Yeltsin era that Russia would develop into a modern, open democracy. It is, as John Stuart Mill wrote, stunting and curtailing the moral capacities of the Russian population. But this is not the only danger. The greater danger is that the drift towards totalitarianism cannot be excluded. “The decisive difference between totalitarian domination, based on terror, and tyrannies and dictatorships, established by violence,” wrote Hannah Arendt, “is that the former turns not only against its enemies but against its friends and supporters as well, being afraid of all power, even the power of its friends.”²⁴ Putin’s system does not tolerate alternative centers of power that have the slightest appearance of independence. That is why he has abolished elected governors, attacked Yukos chief Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and brought the national TV channels under the Kremlin’s control. For the same reason, Moscow’s mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, was dismissed in October 2010 and Mikhail Prokhorov eliminated as leader of the Right Cause (*Pravoe Delo*) party in September 2011.

This intolerance of alternative, even “friendly”, centers of power²⁵ is only one reason why Putin’s authoritarian state could eventually drift into a more totalitarian direction. A second reason is that the process of increased control and repression inside Russia will generate its own dynamic. Even the two fascist regimes of the inter-war era were totalitarian but in different degrees. Mussolini’s Italy is generally

considered “softer” and less totalitarian than Hitler’s Germany, because in Italy there still existed counter-forces in the person of the king and in the catholic Church. When, at the end of the war, Mussolini became the ruler of the Salò Republic in Northern Italy, which was a *de facto* German protectorate, there was no longer a king or a Catholic Church that could function as countervailing powers. The Salò Republic was no less totalitarian than Nazi Germany. In the fascist regimes of the inter-war era there was an immanent dynamic that led to the development of a totalitarian state. This dynamic was fed by a dialectical relationship between the processes of internal repression and outward aggression. Internal repression generates tensions in society. The leadership tries to ease these tensions in two ways: internally, by directing aggression toward minority groups that are used as scapegoats, and externally, by directing aggression toward foreign enemies. Wars of aggression and the militarization of society that are a consequence of it, lead to a further disciplining of society and to an increase in state repression. Consequently one can observe a spiraling process of mutual reinforcing phases of internal repression and outward aggression. This process could be observed in Russia during the decade-long war in Chechnya that was accompanied by a multitude of repressive measures in Russia itself. Even if present-day Russia is not a totalitarian state, this, in itself, is not reassuring. Franz Neumann already remarked “that in modern circumstances every dictatorship has a tendency to become totalitarian and destroy democracy.”²⁶ This opinion was shared by Hannah Arendt. “As far as free society is concerned,” she wrote, “there will be no final conflict with totalitarianism, because neither defeat nor victory will ever be conclusive. (...) Moreover, totalitarianism has brought with it an entirely new form of government which as a potentiality and an ever-present danger is only too likely to stay with us from now on—just as other forms of government which came about in different historical moments have stayed with mankind regardless of temporary defeats: monarchies and republics, tyrannies, dictatorships, and despotisms.”²⁷

The role of the Orthodox Church

What makes Russia also a special case is the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Putin’s system. One can regularly watch the Russian leader on television, attending religious services and kissing icons with an ostentatious display of devotion. Putin seems to feel completely at ease in the company of priests in their golden-brocaded vestments. He has

a private chapel in his house that he once proudly showed to U.S. President George W. Bush. This new, religious face of official Russia may puzzle Westerners, especially secularized Europeans. One can only guess how sincere Putin's devotion is. Religiosity seems, at first sight, not to be a natural gift for the grandson of one of Stalin's cooks and the son of a NKVD agent,²⁸ who grew up in the officially atheist Soviet Union. In the autobiographical book *First Person*, however, which was published shortly after he became president, he admits that his mother, a deeply religious person, had allowed him to be baptized as a baby, but kept the baptism secret from his father, a party member.²⁹ When he went to Israel in 1993, his mother gave him his baptismal cross to get it blessed at Jesus' tomb. "I did as she said," he told, "and then put the cross around my neck. I have never taken it off since."³⁰ However, by 1993 wearing an Orthodox baptismal cross was no longer an act of rebellion. It might even have become "the right thing to do." At the time when Putin joined the KGB, such an open display of religiosity certainly would not have helped his career. Although we cannot exclude a late conversion, a more mundane explication for Putin's display of religious fervor could have been his keen sense of the importance of the Church for political reasons. Some critics have, therefore, spoken of an unholy alliance.³¹ "The relationship might seem odd," wrote Adrian Blomfield, Moscow correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*. "It was the KGB, after all, that led the persecution of the Church in Soviet times, when priests were regularly jailed, tortured and executed."³² Putin's KGB past, however, was in itself not a liability, because former Patriarch Aleksey II, as well as his successor Patriarch Kirill, were former KGB agents, according to Soviet archives.

The relationship between the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church has never before been so warm and cordial as in Putin's Russia, even not under the tsars. As a rule, close partners want to live together. It was, therefore, no surprise that this physical cohabitation took place in November 2011, when Patriarch Kirill moved into the Kremlin following his sixty-fifth birthday. He and his staff occupied a part of the building that belonged to the Patriarchate before 1917. Some critical voices asked if Kirill's presence in the Kremlin did not jeopardize the separation of Church and state, guaranteed by the Constitution. No, said Maksim Shevchenko, a member of the Public Chamber that has the function to represent civil society: "This doesn't contradict the concept of a secular state, because these specific chambers were built for the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in the first place." And

he added: "It's like the Vatican that is in the center of Rome—no one complains about that,"³³ forgetting, however, that the Vatican is an independent state and not situated in the Quirinale, the residence of the Italian president. It is clear that the Church has profited from its new political patronage. The Kremlin initiated plans to appoint Orthodox priests as military chaplains in the Russian army and added a new religious holiday to the state calendar, commemorating the adoption of Christianity by tenth-century Kievan Rus, when Prince Vladimir the Great converted to Christianity and had all his subjects baptized. Today the Church is omnipresent. Russians could see the new Patriarch, Kirill, on TV, blessing the Russian Olympic team before its departure for Vancouver. When the Patriarch wanted to introduce compulsory Orthodox education into the curricula of state schools, this led to protests from the other three established religions: Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. But his demand was approved and in 2010 religious education classes started in state schools. Although it is possible for the students to study religions other than Orthodox Christianity and a secular option is also available, critics fear that these minority options will not be truly followed.³⁴ The cherry on top of the cake, however, is a law drafted in 2007 by the economics ministry on the restoration to the Church of the church buildings, monasteries, land and other possessions seized by the Bolsheviks. It would make the Orthodox Church a major property-owner. "Real estate analysts have said that given the value of land in Moscow and other cities, the law could put the Church in the league of the gas and railroad monopolies, Gazprom and Russian Railways."³⁵ The Duma passed the law by 345 votes to 42 on November 19, 2010. Under the law, the federal, regional, and municipal authorities have two years to hand over property after a decision is made on a claim by the church.³⁶

Critics fear that this mutual embrace in Russia of the state and the Orthodox Church might undermine the separation of Church and state that is guaranteed by the constitution. However, at the same time this close relationship between the state and the church marks an important difference between Putinist Russia and the fascist systems of the inter-war era. German National-Socialism and Italian Fascism were both essentially anti-religious and anti-clerical systems. They rejected Christianity and put themselves—as secular pseudo-religions—in its place. "Under [Italian] Fascism," wrote Roger Griffin, "an elaborate, in theological terms fundamentally secular and pagan, 'political religion' was instituted alongside Catholicism through a constant stream of ritual events, large-scale cultural projects, and the imposition of an official

retorical discourse with an overt religious register of language.”³⁷ There existed a clear competition between Christianity on the one hand—both Protestantism and Catholicism—and the fascist systems on the other. The universalism of the former was incompatible with the nationalist ethnocentrism of the latter.

This did not mean that there were no instances of cooperation between the two. A clear example of this are the Lateran Accords between Fascist Italy and the Holy See signed on February 11, 1929. These three Accords included the recognition of the sovereignty of the Vatican City, a financial arrangement compensating the Holy See for the loss of its territories in 1870, and a Concordat. This Concordat made Catholicism Italy’s state religion, gave the Church a role in primary and secondary education, and recognized religious marriages as valid. Critics—also in Mussolini’s own Fascist party—considered that too many concessions had been made to the Vatican. The question was, whether Mussolini or the Pope profited most. The Accords gave Mussolini the international stature of a statesman (the Pope, in a speech two days later in Milan called Mussolini “a man that Providence had made him to meet”) and brought him the approval of Italy’s Catholic majority, even from those that until then had remained skeptical toward his regime. Marcel Gauchet rightly emphasized that Mussolini’s rapprochement with the Catholic Church did not mean that he gave up the pseudo-religious pretensions of the Fascist creed. “This dependence on the positive religion [Catholicism] is the specificity of Fascism among the secular religions. Everything turns around a muted fight with the established cult of which it wants to take over the external forms in order to invert the orientation from within. (...) Fascism departs from the established religion, inhabits it, apes the appearances, in order to appropriate the energy and to invert the priorities.”³⁸ Gauchet, in fact, paints the relationship between Italian Fascism and the Catholic Church not so much as a symbiotic collaboration, but as a vampire-like relationship in which Fascism appropriates the Church’s blood and energy to use it for its own purposes, which are an imperial role for Italy and the absolute priority of the state as a means to realize this goal. A similar situation existed in Germany. Hitler’s religion is a “counter-Catholicism.”³⁹ “From the beginning, Hitler’s religion is in competition with Christianity; *Mein Kampf* defines itself as anti-Christian.”⁴⁰ But Hitler admired the Catholic Church for its liturgy, its colorful processions and impressive celebrations, which he copied and appropriated for his own religion of the pure race.

The relationship between the state and the Orthodox Church in present-day Russia presents some similarities with the situation in

Mussolini's Italy with regard to the privileged position accorded to the Church. But instead of a vampire-like relationship in which one party uses the other for its own—different—purposes, in Russia there seems to exist a complete symbiosis between the Church and the state—which means that they not only closely cooperate, but that also their respective goals are in complete harmony. These goals are a renewed imperial role for Russia and a strong state to make this imperial role possible. The tension that existed in Fascist Italy between the universalism of the Catholic Church on the one hand and the ethnocentric nationalism of the Fascist party on the other, is absent in Russia. The reason for this is that the Russian Orthodox Church is first of all a *Russian* Orthodox Church. From its earliest beginnings, the Christian faith in Russia has been linked to the Russian state and to its territorial expansion. The Russian Orthodox Church was able to spread its faith in the wake of the conquering tsarist armies. It was, therefore, no coincidence that in the nineteenth century, the Church was a staunch supporter of the tsarist slogan "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationhood," in which the Orthodox religion merged with authoritarian rule and Russian nationalism. There exists, apparently, not the slightest difference between the goals of the Church and the Kremlin. On the contrary, both parties know that there is something to be gained from close cooperation. This close cooperation is also guaranteed by the fact that since tsarist times, the Russian Orthodox Church was always tightly controlled by the state. In the present situation, the Church is not only a valuable ally for the Kremlin, but it also provides compensation for the ideological void of Putin's system by instilling ideas in the population about Russia's "unique vocation," "the Russian soul," and "Russian spirituality"—that are contrasted with "Western superficiality," "Western materialism," and "Western consumerism." These ideas are completely consistent with the ultra-nationalist goals of the Kremlin. The fascist systems of the inter-war era presented themselves as "political religions" in the sense of Eric Voegelin, who contrasted these *innerweltliche Religionen* (inner-worldly religions) with the Christian *überweltliche Religionen* (metaphysical religions).⁴¹ They presented themselves as alternatives to the existing (Christian) religion. Putinism, however, does not need to present itself as an alternative to the Russian Orthodox religion. The reason for this is that the metaphysical orientation of the Russian Orthodox Church is submerged in an inner-worldly orientation that is utterly ethnocentrist, which ensures that it fits perfectly into the Putinist world vision.

How successful this close cooperation between the Kremlin and the Church is, becomes clear from the results of opinion polls that show that

Russians are increasingly embracing Orthodoxy as part of their identity. In 2008, for instance, 71 percent of respondents described themselves as Russian Orthodox, up from 59 percent in 2003.⁴² This seems, however, to be less a question of a genuine religiosity than of identity: less than 8 percent of the population is said to attend Orthodox Church services.⁴³ The fact that under Putin the Orthodox faith gradually got the status of Russia's unofficial state religion had negative effects on the other religions. In particular, minority religions, such as Lutherans, Evangelicals, Baptists, Methodists, and Jehovah's Witnesses—in Russia considered as "American sects"—are confronted with growing repression and are barred by officials from buying land and building churches.⁴⁴ These communities, which often lead a semi-clandestine existence, are often forced to meet in private homes for their religious services.⁴⁵ Not much seems to have changed, therefore, since March 1979, when KGB chief Yury Andropov warned agents of the Fifth Department of the KGB (who had the task of fighting dissidence) against "extremist leaders of sects, such as Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Pentecostals,"⁴⁶ which were called by the KGB chief—without irony—"totalitarian sects"⁴⁷ that should be closely monitored.

9

Putinism and Fascism: The 11 Differences (Part II)

I looked into Mr. Putin's eyes and I saw three letters—
a K, and a G and a B.¹

John McCain, US Presidential Candidate

The Siloviki: A new power elite

Another important difference between Putinism and the systems of the inter-war era concerns the social class on which the regime is based. Both National Socialism and Italian Fascism began as movements of disaffected war veterans and unemployed young men (often the same) that subsequently attracted the middle classes from provincial cities, and—in the case of Germany—also the farmers. When the movements grew in strength there was a bandwagon effect and they got more and more the support from leading industrial and financial circles. Attempts by the *haute bourgeoisie* to control the fascist parties after these parties had entered the governments of Italy and Germany, however, failed. Mussolini's *governo fascista* and Hitler's *Reichsregierung* were both counter-examples of Marx's theory that a government of a capitalist country was the representative of the dominating capitalist class. The fascist politicians liberated themselves from the tutelage of the *haute bourgeoisie*. The consequence of this was that the realm of politics gained relative autonomy vis-à-vis the economy.

The Putinist system, equally, began with a group of disaffected people: the many thousands of military officers who lost their jobs in the aftermath of the Cold War, when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved and Russian troops collectively withdrew from Eastern Europe. It was

not only the military that considered itself to be at the losing side. Another group was the KGB. Especially after the failed KGB inspired coup in August 1991² many KGB officers not only lost their jobs, but they did so in disgrace.³ And, what was worse, the elite corps of the former Soviet empire did not only feel humiliated, but had to stand by and passively watch how a new ruling class, the oligarchs, established itself in Russia. This was a heterogeneous group consisting of former party functionaries, factory managers, mafia bosses, and clever young *komsomol* chiefs turned into *biznismeni*. Many former KGB agents had started their own private security and protection agencies and were able to sell their services to the new rich, but this did not compensate for the fact that most of them remained outsiders in the new power structure.

Putin's accession to power changed this situation overnight. His first loyalty lay not with the Yeltsin "Family," but with the KGB in which he had started his career and with its successor organization, the FSB, of which he had become the director when he was a member of Yeltsin's Kremlin court. As a clan chief, Putin started to appoint former KGB officers to positions of power. They got key positions in the national, regional and local governments, as well as in the supervisory and managing boards of the (semi-) national enterprises and energy giants. The result was that the *siloviki*—the people of the secret services and the "power ministries" (Ministries of the Interior and Defence)—became a new ruling elite. The situation had an ironical analogy with the situation in the inter-war era. The oligarchs who brought Putin to power thought that he would defend their interests. In practice, they were very soon sidelined by the new leader, who did not tolerate rival centers of power. Berezovsky was an early victim. "The billionaire thought that he could instrumentalize the new president as he had done with the "Family," but he underestimated the self-sufficiency of the corporation of chekists. It did not need someone to enhance its status, nor a mentor."⁴ The media tycoon Vladimir Gusinsky and Yukos chief Mikhail Khodorkovsky were Putin's next victims. For the other oligarchs, the message was clear: they should mind their own business and not interfere in politics. Although Putinism differed from the systems of the inter-war era regarding the social class on which it was based, there was one striking resemblance: the Russian realm of politics emancipated itself from the realm of economics to become the ultimate sovereign in a similar way to Italy and Germany.

The Chekist legacy: A regime created by the secret police

There is another difference between Putin's Russia and the two systems of the inter-war era:

In Italy and Germany the secret police was the creation of the regime. In Putinist Russia, on the contrary, the regime is the creation of the secret police.

The core of Russia's new power system is the former KGB. That the KGB would be able to play this role was not evident after the abortive KGB coup in August 1991, when attempts were made to reduce its role. These attempts were reflected in various name changes. The KGB was first renamed the Ministry of Security, then the FSK, and, finally, in 1995, the Federal Security Service FSB (*Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti*), emulating another federal institution, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the United States. This change of name was part of a strategy to present a new, "modern," and "democratic" face to the world and to suggest that a fundamental break had been made with the Soviet past. Many people in the West allowed themselves to be duped by this strategy, due to a kind of "mirror imaging" that mistakenly compares Western and Russian intelligence services.⁵ However, "research on the Soviet era has already undermined the common assumption of a basic symmetry between the role of intelligence in East and West. The Cheka and its successors were central to the functioning of the Soviet system in ways that intelligence communities never were to the governments of Western states."⁶ The FSB, unlike the FBI, was the successor organization not of an agency set up to fight crime, but of the political police of a totalitarian country which was tasked to spy on its own citizens, arrest "enemies of the people," and condemn dissidents to prisons, work camps, or psychiatric asylums. This political police functioned as the obedient executive arm of a deadly, at times genocidal regime that used all possible means to repress and kill its supposed enemies. Its activities included torture, poisoning, starving to death, deportation, and summary executions. It is clear that such an organization, explicitly tasked to defend the leadership against its citizens, cannot be compared with police organizations of democratic countries that are set up to defend their citizens against crime. Even the name changes after August 1991 were not a new phenomenon. Name changes were already frequent in early Soviet times.⁷ In 1922, when Lenin introduced his

New Economic Policy (NEP) and wanted to attract Western capital, the name Cheka was changed into the more neutral sounding name OGPU. The Cheka—consisting of the two Russian letters ЧК, an abbreviation for Extraordinary Commission (*Chrezvychaynaya Kommissiya*)—was founded on December 20, 1917 and led by Feliks Dzerzhinsky. Five years later, it had a bloodstained reputation and become synonymous with Lenin's "Red Terror" that resulted in half a million victims—not only individual opponents, but entire classes of people who were considered "enemies of the people."⁸ Apart from its new name, however, the organization remained exactly the same and during the whole Soviet period until today its agents—Putin included—continued to proudly call themselves "chekists," claiming to be the loyal heirs of this organization.

Unfortunately, the only opportunity to fundamentally uproot the system was not used. This opportunity came immediately after the abortive KGB-inspired coup in August 1991. Unlike other countries of the former Soviet bloc, where the secret services were abolished and the personnel dismissed, the KGB continued to exist. After the dissolution of the Communist Party it was the only remaining tightly organized power structure in the country and even Yeltsin, who initially was a an adversary of the KGB, wanted to retain it and use it for his own purposes. He thought it sufficient "to cut the beast in pieces." After the coup, he appointed Vadim Bakatin, a reformist, as a new director of the KGB to do this job. Bakatin, wrote Yevgenia Albats, "was the only decent person ever to have headed that criminal organization."⁹ The first part of Bakatin's reorganization was to make the First Chief Directorate of the KGB, responsible for foreign intelligence, independent. This department, had the highest prestige because it worked abroad. It was first renamed the "USSR Central Intelligence Service" and after the fall of the Soviet Union it was known as the "Foreign Intelligence Service" (SVR) (*Sluzhba Vneshney Razvedki*). Yevgeny Primakov, who was already director of the First Chief Directorate became head of the SVR.

This new Foreign Intelligence Service came in to existence partly from a desire to dismember the KGB and partly because of a desire to retain it while the Soviet Union was dissolving. This fact is emphasized by Michael Waller, who wrote that "this first break from the KGB was largely dictated by fears that non-Russian republics would try to peel away parts of the KGB foreign intelligence apparatus for themselves. (...) The Soviet leadership was decidedly against parceling out the intelligence bureaucracy among the republics."¹⁰ Under Yeltsin's presidency, the remaining rump of the former KGB was divided in four

parts: counterintelligence, border guards, presidential security, and secure communications and electronic intelligence. The new counter-intelligence service combined the internal security functions of several former KGB chief directorates,¹¹ and was assigned to a new Ministry of Security. In December 1993, after Yeltsin's conflict with the parliament, it was renamed Federal Counterintelligence Service or FSK (*Federalnaya Sluzhba Kontrrazvedki*). It became a service under direct supervision of the president in order to strengthen Yeltsin's control. In 1995 its name was changed again to Federal Security Service FSB (*Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti*). The FSK/FSB was the very heart of the chekist system. It took over the functions of three former KGB chief directorates and one directorate responsible for the infiltration of political and social groups and the political surveillance of the media, the universities, and the state enterprises. These services functioned not only as the eyes and ears of a totalitarian regime, but also as its executive arm. They were responsible for the repression, intimidation, deportation, and liquidation of opponents and dissidents. Despite some democratic window dressing, it soon became clear that the new organization was not to give up its old habits. The newly appointed chief of the FSK, Sergey Stepashin, "affirmed the FSK would "most certainly" keep the old agent networks, and was adamant that the identities of past KGB collaborators should never be made public. He also said that his apparatus would continue to conduct domestic spying operations against Russian citizens based on their political views."¹²

Apart from the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and the Internal Intelligence Service (FSB), there were still other "parts of the beast" that were made independent. One was the Federal Protective Service FSO (*Federalnaya Sluzhba Okhrani*), the former Ninth Directorate of the KGB, consisting of 8000–10,000 troops, responsible for the security of the leadership and the protection of official buildings. Another part was the Federal Border Guards PSR (*Pogranichnaya Sluzhba Rossii*), responsible for patrolling Russia's enormous land borders and the coast. Another service to become independent consisted of the former Eighth and Sixteenth Chief Departments of the KGB responsible for the security of government communications, information cryptography, and electronic intelligence. They were brought together in a new organization, the Federal Agency for Government Communications and Information (FAPSI). Finally, there was a small, rather unknown directorate of the KGB that guarded secret underground facilities. It got a new name: Directorate of Special Programs of the President, or GUSP, and fell directly under the President.¹³

Recomposing the divided beast: Toward a re-emergence of the former KGB?

But the former KGB was not only a beast that could be divided. It was a beast that could still easily be reconstituted. And this was what actually happened. The Federal Border Guards that, on December 30, 1993, were brought under a separate ministry, were merged with the FSB on March 11, 2003, by a presidential decree signed by Vladimir Putin. It was not the only former KGB service that returned into the womb of its mother organization after a short period of independent existence. On the same day that the Border Guards returned into the fold, the FAPSI merged with the FSB. The operation “rebuild the KGB” was in full swing. The Federal Protection Service and the SVR, the former international department, still kept their independence. Regarding the SVR, this was not only for efficiency reasons, but also for its image in the West. By building separate organizations for foreign intelligence and internal counterintelligence Russia seemed to have accepted Western standards along the lines of the division of labor between the CIA and the FBI in the US or MI6 and MI5 in Britain.¹⁴ But even the separation of the SVR and FSB could prove only to be temporary. In November 2010, reports were published in the Russian press that Prime Minister Vladimir Putin would attempt to use the scandal surrounding the revelation of ten Russian sleeper agents in the United States in the summer of that year to reshape the intelligence services. The reports “suggested that the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) would be swallowed up by the Federal Security Service (FSB). Such a move, which insiders say has long been on Putin’s wish list, would essentially recreate a monolithic Russian spy agency reminiscent of the old Soviet KGB—reversing one of the landmark reforms of the early 1990s.”¹⁵ It is uncertain whether this will happen, although the Russian press also later confirmed that “today the cooperation between intelligence—SVR and counterintelligence—FSB is rather weak.”¹⁶ What *did* happen, however, was that the GRU—the separate intelligence service of the Russian army, which is often regarded as an unwelcome competitor by its two sister organizations, FSB and the SVR, was downsized. In the period 2009–2011 it lost 1000 officers and 80 of its generals. It also lost its *spetsnaz*, the eight special forces brigades¹⁷ and “most of the GRU’s ‘residencies’—the separate intelligence offices it ran inside Russian embassies abroad—have been closed down, or reduced to a single officer working as a military attaché.”¹⁸ The downsizing of the GRU will relatively strengthen the FSB. If the FSB is to absorb the SVR, the FSB will—again—become one of the

most centralized and powerful intelligence organizations in the world, comparable with the former KGB, but leaner, more modern, and more efficient. This mammoth organization will inherit the age-old problems of Russian intelligence services: its lack of parliamentary control and the fact that it does not function in a democratic environment. It will, therefore, remain different from its Western counterparts. "Russia inherited a KGB that was reorganized and renamed but not reformed," wrote Michael Waller. "Instead of starting anew and ridding itself of the chekist legacy or shunning it as a threat to democratization, the Russian government chose to embrace it and rely upon it as a pillar of stability and a starting point for future society."¹⁹

The Russian FSB, officially tasked to fight crime, has not given up its old functions: the surveillance of the citizens and the repression of dissent. Instead of being a Russian equivalent of the FBI, it remains the executive arm of a repressive regime. Already in 1994, immediately after the "reform" of the KGB, Waller warned with great foresight: "The case of Yugoslavia shows all too well that the surviving instruments of totalitarian repression could act in a similar manner in Russia at some point in the future."²⁰ In the same year, Yevgenia Albats expressed her deep frustration with the "reforms." "A dispassionate look at the post-August 1991 situation will show why such a 'dismantling' was doomed to failure," she wrote. "The 'state within a state' and the state without were like Siamese twins with a single set of vital organs. And yet, properly conducted, this process might have been a first step toward destroying the monster. If strict parliamentary oversight had been established, along with judicial review of operational and investigative activity, and if the newly formed Chekist agencies had been subordinated to other government agencies, real change might have been possible. But nothing of the sort happened."²¹ "The great 'transformation' of the KGB," she concluded, "was turning out to be mostly cosmetic."²² The top brass of the organization had been trained by the KGB of the USSR. They were all former members of the Communist Party who, adapting themselves to the new situation, had given up their former party allegiance. "The dangers of the ex-Communists' role in social and public life are clear and present," wrote Hannah Arendt. Their claim on prominence "is based on the fact that they once have been Communists and therefore are trained in totalitarian thinking. Their aim is to apply this training to a new cause after the old cause has disappointed them. Their methods have, in some instances, consisted in arrogating to themselves the role of the police and almost always result in sowing mistrust among citizens whose 'friendship,' *philia* according to Aristotle, is the

surest foundation of political life.”²³ Hannah Arendt’s warning is still valid today.

The role of the Mafia

Fascist and totalitarian regimes, built on arbitrariness, lawlessness, and violence tend to attract thugs and criminal elements. This happened both in Hitler’s Germany and in Mussolini’s Italy. It happened also in the Soviet Union. Young Stalin himself began his career as a criminal. Martin Latsis, an early Cheka official, already complained that “work in the Cheka, conducted in an atmosphere of physical coercion, attracts corrupt and outright criminal elements which, profiting from their position as Cheka agents, blackmail and extort, filling their pockets.”²⁴ What is different in present-day Russia, however, is not the cooperation of the secret services with criminal individuals, but their involvement in *organized* crime. In 1994, the number of criminal gangs in Russia was estimated between 3000 and 4000.²⁵ The privatization process at the time of Gorbachev’s perestroika was the start of an exponential growth of these criminal organizations that were playing a central role in the redistribution and appropriation of former public property. “What makes the Russian mafiya distinctively menacing,” wrote Stephen Handelman, “is its connection to key sections of the government bureaucracy. No criminal enterprise of this complexity could have succeeded without the support and encouragement of officials at every level.”²⁶ “Crime in the post-Soviet era,” he continued, “in other words, is often a continuation of politics by other means.”²⁷ What was extremely disturbing was the symbiosis that was taking place in Russia between the secret services and the mafias. The mafias and these services mutually helped each other: the former in doing the dirty work for the secret services, the latter in helping the mafias to take control of businesses and to launder its illegal money. The existence of these practices were revealed by former senior FSB officials. One of them told *Izvestia*: “The problem is that both the Interior Ministry and the FSB provide turnkey services, since both have investigative and operational branches and thus can ‘close’ a rival and seize his business. (...) Such broad powers have been used by corrupt officers to open investigations into businesses to extract bribes or to help one business seize another in exchange for a large payoff.”²⁸ Lawrence M. Martin-Bittman of Boston University observed that “the symbiosis of the Russian intelligence service and the Russian Mafia makes this cooperative venture physically one of the most dangerous

secret organizations in the world, capable of blackmailing and murdering victims anywhere.”²⁹ An opinion that is shared by Oleg Gordievsky, a KGB defector who lives in the United Kingdom, and who “thought the dangerous thing about Putin was not that he was reverting to Soviet ways, but that he was failing to sufficiently reconstitute control over the spy services.” As he put it, “The KGB without the Communist Party is a gang of gangsters.”³⁰ Other commentators equally rung alarm bells. Edward Lucas wrote: “In Vladimir Putin’s Russia, the FSB—the KGB’s main successor—is largely unsupervised by anyone. (...) The agency’s autonomy has been a catastrophe for Russia and should be a grave concern for the West.”³¹ And Soldatov and Borogan compared the FSB with the *Mukhabarat*, the secret police of the Arab world: “Impenetrable, thoroughly corrupted, and unopposed to employing brutal methods against individuals and groups suspected of terrorism and dissent.”³² That this symbiosis between government, secret services, and organized crime in Russia is a growing matter of concern for Western governments became clear in the winter of 2010 when WikiLeaks published cables of the staff of the US embassy in Moscow in which these officials called Russia a corrupt “mafia state.”³³

Putin’s Russia as a “Pluralist Western-style democracy”

A final difference between Putin’s regime and the fascist regimes of the inter-war era is that Putin’s regime neither presents itself as hostile toward democracy, nor as an alternative to democracy. Putin did not abolish parliament. He did not declare a state of emergency. He did not govern by decree. On the contrary, almost scrupulously he followed the letter of the law and the constitution (although not its spirit). He boasted about Russia’s newly created democracy, its status as a modern country with a working parliament, free elections, a multiparty system, and, what he called—in a strange, Freudian formulation—the “dictatorship of the law.” Putin reveled in being treated by the leaders of the Western democracies as “one of them” during the meetings of the G8. And despite the fact that Russia was many times condemned by the European Court of Human Rights, he firmly kept her in the Council of Europe, the organization of democratic European states of which Russia had become a member in 1996. Unlike the dictatorships of the 1930s with their one-party systems that claimed to be a better alternative to the decadent Western democracies by expressing a “direct symbiosis” of the people with their leader, Putin declared that he adhered to democratic freedoms and political pluralism.

The practice behind this democratic façade, however, was quite different. During the eight years of his presidency and the four years that he combined the function of prime minister with that of national strongman, the still fragile roots of Russian democracy were effectively destroyed and trampled upon: elections for regional governors were abolished, Duma elections rigged by fraud, OSCE election monitors not allowed to enter the country, opposition parties denied registration, journalists harassed and killed, demonstrators arrested, and the national TV channels brought under the control of the Kremlin. For these reasons, Freedom House ranked Russia in 2005 among the “not free” countries. But Western criticism was countered by the deputy chief of the presidential administration Vladislav Surkov, with the remark that “the Russian understanding of democracy is not at all different from the generally accepted European concept of it.”³⁴ Surkov added: “Our Russian model of democracy is called ‘sovereign democracy,’”³⁵ in fact denying what he just said before by emphasizing that Russia had its own, specifically *Russian* version of democracy that could not be criticized by outsiders because it responded not to universal, but to its own, national, standards.³⁶ This homegrown, Russian version of “democracy” was also propagated by another Kremlin pundit, Gleb Pavlovsky, Director of the Foundation for Effective Politics, who, in the beginning of the 1990s, presented a draft proposal in the online *Rusky Zhurnal*, which was meant as an alternative for a Western liberal course. “This draft had strong corporatist tendencies and emphasized the ‘direct dialogue of the leader with the people,’ without bureaucratic apparatus and elites. In this concept especially the control over the electronic mass media played an important role.”³⁷ But while Pavlovsky presented his draft as an alternative to Western liberal democracy, Putin judged it more opportune to present Russian “sovereign democracy” as a new, young branch to the tree of Western liberal democracy. And despite the fact that the Kremlin had effectively killed democracy, he continued to present his system as genuinely democratic. In 1787 Prince Potemkin, Catherine the Great’s former lover and de facto co-ruler, is said to have constructed empty fake villages on the banks of the Dniepr river before a scheduled visit of the tsarina, to show her that the colonization of newly conquered lands in Southern Russia was in full swing. The expression “Potemkin villages” has since then become proverbial for pseudo structures set up to deceive others.³⁸ Potemkin’s villages, however, seemed to have been more real³⁹ than the democratic character of Surkov’s and Putin’s “sovereign democracy.”

Russia has clearly made a huge U-turn since December 1989 when Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and US President George H. W.

Bush were sitting in the *Maxim Gorky*, a Soviet naval ship, in the Mediterranean off the coast of Malta, discussing the unification of the two Germanies on the basis of Western values. According to the Russian transcript, the conversation went as follows:

- Gorbachev:* Aleksander Yakovlev asks: How come democracy, openness and the market are “Western” values?
- Bush:* Because the USA and Western Europe have shared them for many years.
- Gorbachev:* But we share them too. These are, after all, values that belong to the whole of humanity.
- Bush:* But that wasn’t always true ...”⁴⁰ Then James Baker, the US Secretary of State, interfered.
- “Baker:* Perhaps we could agree on the compromise that this positive process is on the basis of ‘democratic values’?”⁴¹

The German philosopher Karl Jaspers wrote: “For the conservation of freedom and legitimacy and the prevention of despotism and terror it remains decisive that real elections take place. The characteristic of despotism is the abolition of real elections by fake elections, by which it still expresses its false respect for the will to freedom of our epoch.”⁴² This is a profound truth. One should equally keep in mind the observation made by Franz Neumann that “all modern dictatorships emerged from democratic situations. That is true for Italy, Germany, Spain, Argentina, maybe also for the Soviet Union, although to a lesser extent. The dictator must, therefore, win the support of the masses and, as soon as he gets it, practise the ritual of democracy, even when he destroys its substance.”⁴³ Unfortunately, many Western, and especially European, leaders, let themselves be fooled by the Kremlin’s democratic pretensions.

Are the 11 differences relevant?

We have analyzed 11 differences between Putinism and the fascist systems of the inter-war era. Are these 11 differences big enough to conclude that Putinism does not resemble these systems and that allegations of fascist tendencies made by critics are without substance? That conclusion would be premature, and this is for two reasons:

1. In the first place, not all the mentioned differences have the same importance. Some differences are more relevant than others.

2. In the second place, we have to take into account that Putinism—as we will see in Table 9.1—is not a static system that is given once and for all. Putinism is a highly dynamic system that is developing according to an inbuilt logic.

As concerns the first point, one can say that not all of the aforementioned differences have the same relevance. The fact, for instance, that Putin came to power without the support of a political party or without broad popular support does in itself not indicate anything about the way in which he is exercising power. This element, therefore, seems to be of less importance. The same is true for the fact that he did not build a party to bring him to power, but built a party afterwards with the aim of keeping him in power. This fact is certainly of historical interest, but—again—it does not say anything about the way in which he is exercising power. The third difference, that United Russia defined itself as a “centrist” party, is more relevant, because it comes closer to the ideological core of Putinism. Here we can observe a genuine difference between Putin’s party and the parties of the inter-war era, which defined themselves not as centrist, but as revolutionary parties. Also the fact that Putin did not create party militias comparable to the German SA or the Italian *fasci di combattimento* is an important difference, because the use of violence against political opponents was quintessential for both Italian and German fascism. The fourth difference, the official ideology of “Anti-Fascism” of Putin’s Russia, is more equivocal. Its obvious significance is a principled rejection of fascism by the Russian state. However, this officially declared “anti-fascism” was rather a commemoration of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany than a rejection of the ugly sides of fascism from a standpoint of democratic freedoms and human rights. Instead of a principled confirmation of democratic principles, “anti-fascism” often becomes the equivalent for ultra-nationalist self-celebration. We could find a similar ambiguity in the officially proclaimed anti-racism. Contrary to the systems of the inter-war era, Putinism is not racist. Not only would state-sponsored racism run counter to the principles of the UN, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe, but it would also strengthen centrifugal tendencies in the multi-ethnic Russian Federation itself. In addition, it would undermine Russian efforts to re-establish its central position in its former multi-ethnic empire. However, despite the official anti-racist discourse there are hints at liaisons between racist skinhead groups and government agencies, including the police and the secret services. And on different occasions Putin himself has not hesitated to ride the racist wave. The sixth

difference is less equivocal. It concerns the absence of totalitarianism. Whatever critics may say, one thing is certain: contemporary Russia is not a totalitarian state and it cannot be compared with the totalitarian states of Stalin, Hitler, or Mussolini. Even Boris Nemtsov, a former deputy prime minister under Yeltsin, who is one of the leaders of the liberal opposition and a staunch Putin critic, declared that "Putinism is the absence of political freedom with at the same time personal freedom." (...) "I can travel today to the West or emigrate. I can express myself freely on the internet (...). People conduct their lives as they want. That was not possible under Stalin."⁴⁴

The next difference was that Putin did not establish his political system as a pseudo-religion in competition with established religion, but sought, on the contrary, a close cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church. The difference here is less fundamental than it might appear at first sight. After the demise of communism the Orthodox Church was used by the state as an ideological reservoir to fill the ideological void. This is possible, first, because for most of Russian history the Orthodox Church has had a symbiotic relationship with the state. Second, because the Russian Orthodox Church is less universalist than its Western counterparts: it easily identifies itself with the *raison d'état* of the Russian state. The Russian state no longer needs to build its own secular counter-religion to strengthen and to celebrate its state power as it did during communism, because the existing Orthodox Church perfectly fulfills this role. The next difference concerned the social basis of Putinism: the *siloviki*. Both systems of the inter-war era started as soldiers' movements. Many of its first members were dissatisfied war veterans who could not find jobs in their crisis-ridden countries. It was only afterwards that the middle classes joined. Although Putin certainly had the support of the thousands of army officers, who had lost their jobs after the demise of the Soviet Union, he found his core supporters in the secret services. His regime, therefore, is, if not the conscious creation, the product of the Russian secret service. This is different from Germany and Italy, where the secret services (OVRI in Italy and Gestapo in Germany) were created by the regimes *after* coming to power. Therefore the relative power position of the secret services in Putin's regime is even more important than in the systems of the inter-war era. The legacy of the Russian secret service, its KGB past, its role in Stalin's terror, its inbuilt paranoia and its drive to control the lives of the citizens, are a permanent, if not a direct threat to the still existing freedoms in Russia. For this reason, the last aforementioned difference: the maintenance by the Putin regime of a façade of a pluralist

electoral democracy, remains important. This is because it offers the opposition the possibility of attacking the hypocrisy of the regime. In conclusion we may say that there are important differences between Putinism and the systems of the inter-war era. The most important ones concern the “centrist” position of the party, the absence of party militias, the absence of state-sponsored racism, an official ideology of “anti-fascism,” the absence of totalitarianism, and the pretense of maintaining an electoral democracy.

The “Putinist dynamic of change”, 2000–2012

A second point to take into account is the fact that Putinism is far from a static system. It is not something that is fixed once and for all: it reflects a dynamic praxis and is, therefore, a *dynamic* concept. In January 2000, immediately after Putin’s appointment as acting president by Boris Yeltsin, early Putinism was something quite different from the mature Putinism of the year 2012, the end result of 12 years of *de facto* uninterrupted rule. We have, therefore, made a comparison between Putinism, as it existed in 2000, and Putinism, as it had developed through 2012 in Table 9.1. In this table, we have reduced

Table 9.1 The Putinist dynamic of change: Development of Putinism, 2000–2012—A comparison of 13 characteristics of the ideal type of classical fascism

	Putinism 2000	Putinism 2012
One-party state	No	Δ
Formation of (party)militia	No	Δ
Leader principle	No	Yes
Symbiosis between the state and the ruling party	No	Yes
The state dominates the economy	No	Yes
Corporatism	No	Δ
The state strives for totalitarian control of civil society	No	Δ
Ultra-nationalism	No	Yes
Values of virility and military strength	Yes	Yes
Dreams of restoring national greatness	Yes	Yes
State-sponsored racism	No	No
Mythical political religion	No	Δ
Aggressive foreign policy	No	Yes

Explanation: The symbol Δ indicates that in the period 2000–2012 in Russia **growth** has taken place of the concerned characteristic, without, however, leading to its full implementation. The symbol Δ indicates a dynamic evolution.

the ideal type of fascism to 13 categories and indicated an assessment of their degree of implementation. There are three possibilities: the mentioned category can be present, it can be absent, or a dynamic development has taken place—indicated by the symbol Δ. In the last case, it cannot be concluded that a category is fully implemented, but only that developments have taken place that go in the direction of implementation. (Theoretically, a category that was present in 2000 could also have diminished or even disappeared altogether in 2012. However, we did not record any examples.)

What immediately catches the eye in Table 9.1 is that Putinism in 2000 was rather far removed from the fascist ideal type. Dreams of restoring imperial greatness and values of virility and military strength were certainly present from the beginning. However, not only was this a far cry from fascism, but it had still the potential to develop into a more open and pluralist, democratic society. This can explain why Putin's arrival at the Kremlin was generally welcomed by most Western leaders. Twelve years later, however, the situation has fundamentally changed. Russia has developed into an authoritarian state in which a symbiosis exists between the state elite and the ruling United Russia party. The state dominates the economy, ultra-nationalism rampant, and the Kremlin conducts an assertive, and sometimes openly aggressive foreign policy. In addition, there can be observed an internal dynamic in the system that shows a tendency to develop into a one-party state, which—eventually, with the help of the secret services—could strive to establish a totalitarian control over civil society. This is, of course, a worst case scenario, and it does not mean that this dynamic will necessarily materialize. But the dynamic of a regime is of great importance, as Robert Dahl has emphasized. According to Dahl, “in appraising a nondemocratic regime, we need to make judgments about the *dynamics of change*, and particularly the *direction* and *rate* of change. A near polyarchy [i.e. democracy, MHVH] that is swiftly sliding deeper into repression is not equivalent to a near polyarchy that is moving steadily toward full polyarchy. Even highly repressive regimes are not morally and empirically equivalent if their dynamics of change are radically different.”⁴⁵

The “Putinist dynamics of change” included:

- the suppression of regional democracy by abolishing the elections for regional governors; (the re-introduction of these elections in 2012 did not fundamentally change this situation because candidates still need prior approval from the Kremlin).

- the transformation of a still moderately pluralist political system into a virtual one-party state;
- the transformation of the leading party *Yedinaya Rossiya* (United Russia) from a conservative “center” party of (provincial) functionaries into a party with outspoken ultra-nationalist wings that do not hide their sympathies for revisionist and neo-imperialist policies;⁴⁶
- the Kremlin’s initiative to set up the *Nashi* (Our Guys), a youth organization that spreads the ultra-nationalist gospel and harasses internal and external enemies of the regime;
- the adoption of new laws that gave the secret service more powers to repress dissidence;
- a brutal war in Chechnya, an invasion of neighboring Georgia, and an aggressive foreign policy vis-à-vis countries in the former Soviet space.

Part III

Putinism, Bonapartism, and Berlusconism

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10

Putinism and Bonapartism: The Ten Resemblances

Certain persons say: the Empire means war; I say, the Empire means peace.¹

Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte

Introduction

In Parts I and II we analyzed the dynamics of Putinism in the first 12 years of its existence. These dynamics point to a Kremlin-sponsored growth of ultra-nationalism, the exaltation of a national “rebirth” and a strong, centralized state, the foundation of an ugly nationalist youth movement, the massive violation of human rights in Chechnya, and military adventurism and territorial annexationist policies abroad. These dynamics seem to fit Griffin’s minimal definition of fascism, as well as my amended version of this minimal definition. However, Putinism still differs in some important aspects from the fascist ideal type. And here the comparison with two other political systems can, eventually, shed more light. It is the comparison with Bonapartism on the one hand, and with Berlusconi on the other. We will analyze the resemblance with Bonapartism in this chapter, and the resemblance with Berlusconi in the next.

Putinism and Bonapartism: The ten resemblances

The regime of Napoleon III (1848–1870) seems to provide clues to a better understanding of the Putinist system. It is often considered to be *proto-fascist* and to be a precursor of the later fascist systems. “It is tempting,” wrote, for instance, the French historian Pierre Milza, “to compare the authoritarian *Empire* [of Napoleon III] with Mussolini’s regime.”² He

added that one has “to admit that in certain points the convergences are strong.”³ Another historian, Salwyn Schapiro, considered “the real significance of the Second Empire (...) greater today than when it flourished. The methods that it employed, the policies that it pursued, and the ideas that it proclaimed anticipated in a vague, incomplete way what is now known as ‘fascism’.”⁴ The regime of Vladimir Putin has a peculiar resemblance to the French Second Empire for a number of reasons, at least ten.

- Both regimes did their utmost to maintain a democratic façade.
- Both regimes were characterized by the relative independence of the state from the leading economic circles.
- Both regimes emphasized law and order and relied heavily on a repressive secret police.
- Both regimes lacked a clear ideology and developed their ideologies only later.
- Both regimes were authoritarian rather than totalitarian.
- Both regimes were not racist.
- Both regimes had an almost symbiotic relationship with the national majority religion.
- Both regimes were obsessed by the goal of restoring national prestige.
- Both regimes developed a state-led modernization of the economy in which the modernization of the army occupied an important place.
- Both regimes initiated military adventures with the aim of annexing foreign territories.

We shall now have a closer look at these ten resemblances.

Napoleon III’s democratic façade

Napoleon III was the son of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor Napoleon’s younger brother, who was King of Holland between 1806 and 1810. Napoleon’s nephew felt a strong vocation to follow in the footsteps of his famous uncle and attempted two abortive coups in France in 1836 and 1840. After his last coup, he was arrested and was incarcerated in the prison of Ham until 1846, when he succeeded in escaping to Britain. After the February Revolution of 1848, when King Louis Philippe was forced to abdicate, he returned to France and ran as a candidate in the presidential elections of the newly founded Second Republic. The nephew of Napoleon I had no problems with the new democratic constitution. On the contrary, he claimed to be a more

radical democrat than his competitors. On December 10, 1848 he was elected with an overwhelming majority *Prince-Président* of the Second Republic, gaining 74.2 percent of the vote. But Louis-Napoleon was not satisfied with the constitution that restricted the presidency to only one four-year term. Confronted with a hostile parliament that was not willing to change the constitution, he staged a coup on December 2, 1851, and became a dictator. Some weeks after the coup François Guizot, Louis Philippe's former Prime Minister, characterized Louis-Napoleon's regime as follows: "he is a doctrinaire whose doctrine is emperor Napoleon. His general and permanent idea is the complete and uncontested preponderance of the executive power."⁵ The putschist president, however, was able to pose as a democrat by reintroducing universal male suffrage that was abolished by the conservative parliament one and a half year earlier.⁶ Eager to find democratic legitimacy, only a few weeks after the coup, he organized a referendum on a constitutional amendment allowing him to serve an additional ten years as President. He won the referendum with 92.03 percent of the votes. This did not prevent him from assuming the title of emperor that removed any time limit from his rule one year later, on December 2, 1852.

December 2 was a highly symbolic day for Louis-Napoleon: it was the same date on which his uncle had crowned himself French emperor 48 years before. The *Prince-Président*, who had adopted the title Emperor Napoleon III, turned again to the people, asking it for their approval in a referendum. This time the result was even more positive: he obtained 96.87 percent yes votes and only 3.13 percent no votes.⁷ Max Weber called plebiscites 'the specific caesaristic means' (*das spezifisch cäsaristische Mittel*): "It is not a normal 'vote' or 'election,'" wrote Weber, "but an expression of a 'belief' in the leadership vocation of him who claims this acclamation for himself. Either the leader emerges in a military way: as a military dictator like Napoleon I, who lets his position be confirmed by a plebiscite. Or in a civilian way: by a plebiscitary confirmation of the leadership claim of a non military politician like Napoleon III, which is accepted by the army. Both ways of leadership selection are exactly in the same way at odds with the parliamentary principle as with the legitimism of hereditary monarchy."⁸

During Napoleon III's reign, legislative elections for the parliament remained in place. Elections took place in 1852, 1857, 1863, and 1869. On the surface, therefore, nothing seemed to have changed. Male universal suffrage was maintained and the parliament appeared to be working. However, the powers of the parliament were heavily curtailed. It was no longer called a "national assembly," but a "legislative corps": a new name

that reflected not only its diminished prestige, but also a new reality: the parliament was no longer an “assembly” in the literal sense of the word, because it had no longer the right to assemble as one body and deliberate together. As a consequence, and rather symbolically, the assembly hall in the *Palais Bourbon*, the parliament’s building, was suppressed.⁹ Regarding the rights of the deputies, “they don’t have the right of initiative, nor the right to petition, nor the right to interpellate the government or to ask questions to the ministers. The only yearly session is restricted to three months. The president and the vice-president are appointed by the emperor. The only power the deputies dispose of is therefore to reject the law proposals and the budgetary provisions.”¹⁰ The fact that the parliament was reduced to an “assembly of mutes” (*assemblée de muets*)¹¹ was proved by the fact that the proceedings of the discussions were not published. Why should they be published? What higher interest could be served by the publication of the discussions of this phantom body that led a shadowy existence in the dark corridors of the Palais Bourbon for few months each year and whose members did not even have the right to meet the ministers? And let us assume for a moment that if they had this right, what would it have changed? Opposition members were denied the opportunity to ask impertinent questions, because there was virtually no opposition left.

Elections were rigged. The most important opposition party, the Parti de l’Ordre, was banned. Constituency borders were manipulated in order to favor the Bonapartist candidates who, additionally, had the status of “official candidates.” This official status gave them not only the privilege of having their election campaign paid by the government and getting the active support of the local governments, but had also the effect of polarizing further the elections between “us and them.” Elections became additional plebiscites that, in general, favored the government. They resulted in a heavy overrepresentation of the Bonapartists in the parliament, making them almost the sole party.¹² During the reign of Napoleon III, the position of the parliament resembled that of the senate in imperial Rome, as described by Edward Gibbon: “The name of the senate was mentioned with honour till the last period of the empire; the vanity of its members was still flattered with honorary distinctions; but the assembly, which had so long been the source, and so long the instrument, of power, was respectfully suffered to sink into oblivion.”¹³ Alexis de Tocqueville, the unconditional admirer and sharp analyst of American democracy, who, as a liberal Orléanist member of the dissolved parliament had resisted Napoleon III’s coup until the very end, wrote to a friend: “[one] feels

well and sees well that in the name of the sovereignty of the nation one has destructed all public freedoms, that one only has used the formal appearance of a popular election in order to establish a despotism that is more absolute than those that have appeared in France.”¹⁴ The farmers who had voted *en masse* for Napoleon were according to him only “pure voting machines” (*de pures machines à voter*).¹⁵

Censorship and the suppression of the free press

Napoleon did not like the free press, especially when it was in the hands of his political opponents. Through a combination of administrative hurdles, tax measures, censorship laws, and financial pressure he succeeded in controlling the independent press. The censors prosecuted “immoral” authors, such as Gustave Flaubert for his novel *Madame Bovary*, serialized in the *Revue de Paris* in 1856. When it was published as a book one year later it was banned. The poet Charles Baudelaire and the brothers Goncourt were also summoned to appear in court. Despite the censorship, some papers of the left opposition managed to survive of which *Le Siècle* was the best known. It was the fig leaf of Napoleon III’s democracy. One is almost tempted to say that it was the *Novaya Gazeta* of the Second Empire. Fig leaves are essential to hide the ugly nakedness of repressive regimes.

For Napoleon III, the maintenance of the democratic façade was essential. In this he was considerably more modern than the fascist systems of the inter-war era. In his pamphlet *L’extinction du paupérisme* (The extinction of poverty), written while imprisoned at Ham and published in 1844, he already wrote: “one can only govern with the masses; you should therefore organize them in order that they can formulate their will and discipline them in order that they can be led and informed on their own interests.”¹⁶ The masses should be “disciplined” in order that they could “be led.” Dictatorship and popular support went for Napoleon III hand in hand. Pierre Milza commented: “A ‘democratic basis’, a ‘unique leader’, a state that is strongly centralized: these are the elements that constitute Bonapartism: an original political model that links belief in authority—associated with administrative rationalism—with the cult of the sovereignty of the people. Generally, one speaks of *caesarism* to qualify this type of plebiscitary and authoritarian government that will find a wide diffusion in the twentieth century.”¹⁷ Although Putin’s managed democracy is different from Napoleon III’s system, the basic features are the same: especially his attempt to maintain a semblance of a democratic legitimacy, while manipulating the representative system and rigging the

elections in such a way that it became a malleable body in the hands of the executive and lacked any real independence.

The relative independence of the state

Karl Marx was among the first to analyze another specific feature of Napoleon's regime: its relative independence vis-à-vis the powerful *haute bourgeoisie* of entrepreneurs, industrialists and bankers in the country. He immediately grasped this fact because it contradicted his own theory that the government of a capitalist country consisted of the representatives of the ruling capitalist class. In the French Second Empire it was not the *haute bourgeoisie*, but a political adventurer, who, together with his clan and with the support of the masses, had taken power and pushed the bourgeoisie out of the realm of politics. In *The 18th Brumaire of Louis-Napoleon*, written by Marx immediately after Napoleon III's coup of December 1851, he made his famous remark that in history all great historical events and persons happen twice: "one time as a tragedy, the other time as a farce."¹⁸ Louis-Napoleon's coup, however, was not only the farcical reproduction of the coup conducted by his famous uncle in 1799, but—more importantly—it installed a totally new type of regime: "France seems to have escaped from the despotism of a class to fall back under the despotism of an individual," wrote Marx.¹⁹ And he continued: "Only under the second Bonaparte the state seems to have become fully independent."²⁰ But this independence of the state is not absolute, because "the power of the state does not float in the air. Bonaparte represents a class, actually the most numerous class of French society, the *small farmers*."²¹ "Bonaparte as the power of the executive which has made itself independent sees it as his vocation to guarantee the 'civil order'. But the strength of this civil order is the middle class. He considers himself the representative of this middle class and accordingly issues decrees. However, he is only something because he has broken the power of this middle class and breaks it each day again."²² Marx's brilliant analysis of the emancipation and hypostatization of political power under Napoleon III prefigures later analyses of the fascist systems of the twentieth century in which similar processes could be observed.

An outsider takes power

Volodymyr Lesnoy, Ukrainian commentator of Kyiv's *Den* said, as concerns "the rapid rise of Putin himself," that he "is not a hereditary

or career politician, who gradually rose up the political ladder." He is instead someone who rose unexpectedly and quickly and thus manifested "the syndrome of Bonapartism."²³ Populist and fascist leaders are almost by definition political outsiders. Milza called the court of Napoleon III *une cour de parvenus* (a court of upstarts), adding that the emperor himself "does not reject this qualification."²⁴ We can equally here observe a similarity with Putin, the outsider and colorless spy who came in from the Northern cold of Saint Petersburg. Putin used his first presidential term to subdue the class of oligarchs and to establish himself as an independent power above them. The great majority of the oligarchs kept their possessions and their privileges, but the conditions were dictated by Putin. Putin was acclaimed by the population, but he did nothing to give the population any real power. On the contrary, like Napoleon III Putin was supported by the middle classes, but he governed alone and did everything to repress the free expression and political action of the middle classes. One can ask oneself if the interests of the broad middle class are really represented by the regimes of both Bonaparte and Putin. "Napoleon III is only apparently the man of the farmers," wrote Maximilien Rubel, "in reality he is [the man] of the financial aristocracy."²⁵ The same seems to be true in present-day Russia. Putin, who is apparently the man of the middle classes, is in reality the man of the oligarchs.

Law and order and the secret police

Putin is a man of the secret police and the KGB/FSB is his initial power base. Napoleon III was not a man of the secret police, but he soon showed himself very apt at creating and using a secret police to strengthen his regime. The mere fact that this regime was the product of a violent coup made state repression necessary. Two days after the coup, on December 4, 1851, troops opened fire on unarmed citizens on the Paris' boulevards after some of them had cried "Long live the Constitution." This massacre, known as the *fusillade des boulevards* (the boulevard shoot-out), left hundreds of people dead.²⁶ In Paris 4,000 people were arrested, in the provinces 22,000.²⁷ In the departments all over the country opponents were tried by "mixed commissions" consisting of the prefect, the general prosecutor, and a military commander. These commissions started to function on February 3, 1852—two months after the event. "The sessions were kept behind closed doors, without witnesses and without lawyers. The penalties were heavy: 2,804 defendants went to prison, 1,545 were expelled, about 10,000 transported to Algeria,

239 to Cayenne.”²⁸ The repression was such that Alexis de Tocqueville wrote: “In no epoch of my life I have been more profoundly convinced of the necessity and the excellence of free institutions and have not seen more clearly that there existed no real moral greatness in a people without them.”²⁹ Napoleon began gradually to release prisoners. But “in January 1853,” wrote Pierre Milza, “one still counts a bit more than 6,000 condemned people.”³⁰

Napoleon claimed that his power was founded on the consent and the unanimity of the electorate, but he knew that this unanimity was fragile and could quickly unravel. Civil society needed close surveillance in order to detect dissident voices in time. The new strong man of the regime was Maupas, appointed Minister of Police by Napoleon the day after the coup. Maupas “did not hesitate to keep the other members of the government under surveillance and suffers from a real conspiracy obsession.”³¹ This Beria of the Second Empire was dismissed in 1853 and the Ministry of Police dissolved and taken over by the Ministry of the Interior. This ministry was no less effective. It was helped in its task by civil servants—in the first place, the prefects (*préfets*) who were the state representatives in the departments and regions. They were not only the eyes and ears of the regime, but also its spokesmen, its propagandists, and the local commanders of its repressive organs: “the prefects could close newspapers, arrest individuals, decide on all local affairs.”³² Last but not least: “the prefects, essential transmission wheels of the whole authoritarian system, have the mission to organize elections, ‘good’ elections.”³³ “Good” elections were elections won by the Bonapartists. The prefects, however, represented only the top of Napoleon III’s repressive system, because “all civil servants are invited to fulfill a triple mission of propaganda, keeping order, and surveillance of social life. Taking into account the proportions and abstracting from all differences, it is a bit like the role that totalitarian regimes assign to representatives of the unique party.”³⁴

Under Napoleon III, the number of civil servants grew from 477,000 in 1851 to more than 700,000 at the end of his reign—about one half of which consisted of military personnel.³⁵ Urban police more than doubled and increased from 5,000 to 12,150.³⁶ In the cities, “apart from its normal function to repress violations of the common law, the police is called upon to play an eminent political role, which is a consequence of the measures adopted by the government to restrict the field of civil liberties. Its competence is not restricted to the repression of violations of press, reunion, and pedlary laws, [and] the prosecution and arrest of those who are guilty of thought crimes, but it equally includes the hunt

for the most insignificant expressions of opposition against the Empire and its master."³⁷

Both Napoleon III and Putin reigned with an iron fist. In their authoritarian systems there is no place for independent intermediate power structures. The leader at the top does not tolerate the existence of rival power centers. Napoleon III distrusted the indirect representation of the people by the parliament. Instead he sought *direct* physical contact with them. Between 1853 and 1869 he made 16 long tours through the French provinces. "These trips to the country will be purposively made into real instruments of government,"³⁸ wrote Pierre Rosanvallon. "One sees in this way better what constitutes the caesarism in his ambition to establish a new relationship with the representation, theorized by the regime as more authentically democratic than the parliamentary system."³⁹ This caesarist "direct contact with the people" by making walkabouts (*bains de foules*) was meant to replace the despised indirect, parliamentary forms of democracy. Napoleon III abolished local mayoral elections and like Putin suppressed the election of regional governors. His ministers, additionally, had not the right to assemble together and there was no council of ministers that could develop some weight of its own: the ministers were the simple servants of the emperor. Although Putin's regime invented the concept of the *power vertical*, it had already been practiced by Napoleon III.

An ideology of national consensus

In his famous *Discours de Bordeaux*, a speech to the Chamber and the Tribunal of Commerce of Bordeaux in October 1852, Napoleon III said: "Today France surrounds me with its sympathy, because I am not of the family of the ideologues."⁴⁰ Napoleon III boasted the fact that he lacked a specific ideology. His political system was, indeed, quite different from the ideological mainstream of nineteenth-century France. This mainstream was dominated by two parties: on the one hand the republicans and on the other the monarchists. The republicans were in favor of popular sovereignty, the monarchists upheld the principle of divine right, emphasizing that the power of the sovereign was not derived from the people but from God. Napoleon III's regime, however, neither fitted both categories. Bonapartists agreed with the republicans that the basis of the legitimacy of the sovereign was not divine right, but popular sovereignty. However, they did not support claims for a strong parliamentary democracy in which the parliament and the political parties played an active role in defining and controlling the

policies of the executive. Instead they favored a weak parliament and a strong, dictatorial, executive state power. This brought them close to the monarchists. However, as champions of popular sovereignty and universal male suffrage, they were not only at odds with the monarchists, but in many respects they were even more radical than the moderate republicans who advocated a census suffrage that excluded the poorer classes from the right to vote. As far as his contemporaries were concerned Napoleon III's regime was as enigmatic as Mussolini's regime was for *his* contemporaries in the 1920s. "This system was neither right, nor left."⁴¹ Napoleon III claimed to stand *above* the parties and heal society's divisions. Championing a national consensus he claimed to represent "the real national interest." Mussolini's regime was characterized by a similar ideological ambiguity, borrowing its ideas from both sides of the political spectrum. The core, however, of both Napoleon III's and Mussolini's ideology showed a great similarity. It consisted of a pure form of caesarism in which a personal dictatorship was legitimized by plebiscitary support, simultaneously restricting individual and civil freedoms and suppressing any independent role for intermediary institutions, including political parties.

It is not difficult to recognize the same caesarist strain in Putin's regime. In the beginning, observers, had great difficulty in defining Putin's regime. Putin was once called a Western-style "liberal free marketer," and then a "pure democrat" (Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's remark that Putin was a *lupenreiner Demokrat*), or "a friend of the West," before (and sometimes even after) his authoritarian and praetorian tendencies came to the fore. Like the regimes of Napoleon III and Mussolini, Putin's regime has no clear ideology. The ideology was only built afterwards. One building block of this ideology was the "power vertical"—which was a legitimization theory for the centralization of state power in the best Bonapartist tradition. Another building block was the slogan "sovereign democracy"—which resembled the Bonapartist claim that the regime was based on popular sovereignty – but denying this "democracy" a strong parliament, a strong multi-party system, and international monitoring to guarantee fair elections. A third building block was the "dictatorship of the law"—emphasizing Bonapartist state repression against offenders, a category in which political opponents implicitly were included. Finally, we find an echo of Bonaparte's claim that he had the right to intervene militarily to help oppressed nationalities abroad in Russia's foreign policy doctrine of August 2008 in which the Kremlin claimed the right to defend Russian minorities in former Soviet republics.

Bonapartism: Neither racist nor totalitarian

Bonapartism was not racist. This was despite the fact that Napoleon I had reinstated slavery in the French colonies in 1802 after it had been abolished eight years earlier by the National Convention.⁴² This, too, despite the fact that in the mid-nineteenth century, everywhere in Europe racism was on the rise. De Gobineau published during Napoleon III's reign in Paris his epoch-making and influential book *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races). Racism—especially its anti-Semitic variant—would be much more prominent in the Third Republic, where it would lead to the explosive Dreyfus Affair. When Napoleon III made two visits to Algeria in the 1860s, he was very much impressed with his interlocutors, local Muslim chieftains whom he held in high regard. Far from presenting himself as the champion of the French colonists who had settled in the country, he rather despised them as corrupt, greedy, and self-serving people and he wanted to protect his Arab subjects by confining the European settlers to the coastal provinces, while planning to found a separate Arab kingdom (*royaume arabe*) of which he himself would be the king. This plan, however, would never materialize.

Bonaparte's Second Empire was authoritarian, but not racist. It was neither totalitarian. "The rulers of a nineteenth-century authoritarian state could deal harshly with opponents," wrote Roger Price, "but were neither willing nor able to engage in the forms of extreme and sustained brutality which have been employed to ensure compliance during the twentieth century."⁴³ Totalitarianism is rather a modern phenomenon. It is, in fact, the political spin-off of the First World War that, for the first time in history, was a *total war*.⁴⁴ This meant that the whole of society was organized in a military way for the war effort, not only the officers and soldiers serving in the army, the navy and the (new) air force, or the workers in the war industries, but also the women who had to leave their homes to work in the factories and replace the men who fought on the front.⁴⁵ Total government control of the economy and civil society had become a feature of early twentieth-century warfare. The "essence of the First World War," wrote John Horne, "lay in a totalizing logic, or potential, of which contemporaries were acutely aware and which appeared profoundly new."⁴⁶ This totalizing character was also apparent "in the readiness to represent the war in absolute terms, as a crusade against a total (and often dehumanized) enemy in which great emphasis was placed on morale, opinion and what amounted to the ideological capacity of each nation to sustain the war effort."⁴⁷

The new, total war laid the basis for the post-First World War totalitarian regimes which applied wartime policies of total centralization, permanent mobilization, and ideological homogenization of the population during peace time.

Against this background, one could argue that the fact that Napoleon III's regime was not totalitarian, was not so much due to some hidden virtue of the emperor, but rather because totalitarianism was not yet "in the air." History was simply not yet ready for it and France, during the Second Empire, was not yet capable of it. One can only guess how Napoleon III's regime would have developed if he had built his regime in the "totalitarian age." The example is Mussolini's Italy, where a period of "authoritarian fascism" was followed by a period of "totalitarian fascism."⁴⁸ "While the *authoritarian fascism* considered the system that was realized between 1925 and 1929 a definitive and substantially complete State," wrote Emilio Gentile, "it represented for the *totalitarian fascism*, on the contrary, only a first stage toward the construction of a state that was completely fascist."⁴⁹ "What is evident today for anyone who observes the reality of fascism in the second half of the 1930s, after the success of the conquest of Ethiopia, is *the conscious and programmed acceleration of the process of totalitarization of society and the state.*"⁵⁰

In the case of Napoleon III there exists, however, as concerns the "totalitarian temptation," apart from the "benefit of the doubt," an important fact that pleads in his favor. This is the fact that with the progression of the years, Napoleon III's regime, unlike the fascist regimes of the inter-war era, did not radicalize, but—on the contrary—from 1860 on, began to liberalize. This liberalization started with an economic liberalization, when Napoleon III signed a free trade treaty with Great Britain in 1860 in an attempt to modernize French industry by exposing it to foreign competition. Political liberalization followed suit. Even within his own Bonapartist party developed a group of "independents," who were in favor of liberal reforms. This led to a relaxation of the press laws and the restoration of the right to assemble. When the elections of 1869 led to a clear victory of the liberal wing, Napoleon III gave in and appointed a reform government under Émile Ollivier. "It is then that one really can speak of a 'liberal Empire,'"⁵¹ wrote Petitfils, who, at the same time, asked: "could one reconcile the principles of the parliamentary monarchy with those of a plebiscitary government?"⁵² The question remains open. In a plebiscite on May 8, 1870 the population approved the liberal reforms. But when two months later, in July, the Franco-Prussian war broke out, the conservatives returned to power. The French defeat at Sedan on September 2, sounded the death knell of Napoleon's

Second Empire. Two days later the Third Republic was proclaimed. The Second Empire, however, remains an important counter-example for the fascist regimes of the inter-war era as a regime that did not radicalize over the years, but, on the contrary—slowly and gradually—liberalized. This is a development that is not without importance for an assessment of the further evolution of Putin's regime in Russia.

Religion in the service of the state

Both Napoleon I and Napoleon III had a rather instrumental vision of the role of the church. Napoleon I did not hesitate to put pressure on the Pope to come to Paris for his coronation for the greater glory of himself. "The interest of Napoleon [I] for Catholicism concerns the Roman ecclesiastical institution, inheritor of an Empire and transmission wheel of the State. The Pope is in the eyes of Caesar the Prefect of the department of souls."⁵³ The Pope, as a "prefect of the department of souls," was for Napoleon I clearly subordinated to himself, the Caesar-Emperor. The nephew followed in the footsteps of his uncle. "Neither clerical, nor fundamentally anticlerical, he has at least understood, like his uncle, that in a Catholic country like France—where faith has made a spectacular come-back after the revolutionary turmoil—the [executive] power could not dispense of the support of religion."⁵⁴ Napoleon III sought therefore, like his uncle, a close alliance with the Catholic Church. In his "Bordeaux Speech" he expressed this with the following words: "I want to bring that still big part of the population to religion, morals, and affluence that, in the middle of a country of faith and belief, hardly knows the precepts of Christ."⁵⁵ However, this "alliance of the throne and the altar does not exclude maintaining the strict state tutelage over the Church of France."⁵⁶

The warm relationship was mutually beneficial. In ten years, the number of pupils attending Catholic schools doubled.⁵⁷ The state budget for church activities was augmented. Salaries of bishops were raised from 10,000 to 15,000 francs. Salaries of priests followed this trend. Victor Hugo severely criticized Napoleon III's *clergé salarié* (salaried clergy) and *évêques fonctionnaires* (civil servant bishops) in his satirical pamphlet *Napoléon-le-Petit*.⁵⁸ But this did not prevent Napoleon III from being regarded by the church as a providential man, sent directly from heaven—not unlike Mussolini after the signing of the Lateran Treaty more than 70 years later. In their enthusiasm some bishops did not hesitate to compare Napoleon III with the first Christian Roman emperor, calling him the new Constantine.⁵⁹ It was clearly the emperor

who benefited the most from this *entente cordiale* between the emperor and the church.

A similar instrumentalization of the church by the state can also be observed in present-day Russia. But this instrumentalization goes much further in the Russian case than in the Second Empire. Napoleon had to deal with a supranational church that despite its political dependence on the French government (Napoleon III had stationed a French garrison in Rome to defend the Pope against the Italian nationalists), maintained its spiritual independence.⁶⁰ The Russian Orthodox Church lacks this independent, supranational character. As a national Russian Church, it falls under the tutelage of the Kremlin and cooperates closely with the Russian secret services.⁶¹ It is, in fact, since the time of the tsars a fully fledged branch of the Russian state apparatus. This was fully recognized by Max Weber, who argued that "Russian Orthodoxy was in a crucially different position from Roman Catholicism: The Church has no Archimedian point outside the sphere of the state, in the form of a Pope, and will never get one. Given the choice between dependence on those under them (...), and dependence on those above, the hierarchy will have no doubt which is preferable for its own interests; indeed, the choice has already been made."⁶²

National prestige and modernization

Both the regimes of Putin and Napoleon III are obsessed with national prestige. Putin's aim is to restore the national prestige that was lost after the fall of the Soviet Union. Napoleon III's aim was similar. After the defeat of the Napoleonic armies in 1815, France was regarded as the pariah of Europe and was closely supervised by England and the three members of the Holy Alliance: Russia, Prussia, and Austria. For Napoleon III "the revocation of the treaties of 1815 is the constant aim of his foreign policy."⁶³ Therefore, Napoleon III not only cherished his victory in 1856 alongside Great Britain in the Crimean War against Russia because it was France's first victory in 40 years, but also because it compensated for the defeat of his uncle in 1815 and made France again a respected member of the European community of states.

Restoring national prestige equally implied the modernization of the country. In this modernization he had allocated a leading role for the state. Napoleon was not adept of the night watchman state, a concept popular in the Anglo-Saxon countries, in which the state had a minimal role. Already in a publication in 1839 he had called the state a *moteur bienfaisant* (a beneficent motor). During his reign he put this beneficent

motor to work with much success. With an unwavering zeal and a relentless energy, he founded banks, built railways, ports, and canals. He allowed Baron Haussmann to completely reconstruct the center of Paris, and gave an important impulse to the industrialization of a still mainly agricultural country. Also prominent was the modernization of the army. He introduced new weapon systems, a permanent army, and planned to make the French navy the second in the world after the British.

Putin shows a similar frenzy to modernize his country. *Modernizatsiya* has become one of the mantras of his regime. The modernization of the military, too is an important element of this program. It is not certain, however, that he will be as successful as Napoleon III. Crime, rampant corruption, and the lack of an independent judiciary stand in the way of attracting foreign capital and technological expertise. Many Russian oligarchs, fearing that their property rights could be threatened by the state and its fiscal authorities, prefer to invest their capital abroad.

The belligerent empire

On October 9, 1852, in his speech before the Chamber of Commerce of Bordeaux, Napoleon III pronounced the famous and often quoted words: "Certain persons say: the Empire means war; I say, the Empire means peace" (*Moi je dis l'Empire, c'est la paix*).⁶⁴ These words were meant to reassure foreign governments that had negative memories of Bonaparte rule. But, contrary to his reassuring words, Napoleon III's reign would be characterized by an almost uninterrupted series of foreign interventions and military adventures. After the successful Crimean War, wrote Maximilien Rubel, "the situation in France remained critical enough to oblige Napoleon III to seek in a new foreign adventure the solution of the problems he had to face at home."⁶⁵ We can observe in Napoleon III's regime the same dynamic that could be found in the fascist regimes of the inter-war era: the tensions in society that are generated by internal repression led the regime to project these tensions on foreign enemies, trying to build a new national consensus by military successes abroad. "Among all the works of glory with which Bonapartism feeds its self-exaltation, the greatest remains that of military power (...). The name of the two Napoleons becomes synonymous with conquest. The concept itself of empire implies war, because the essence of empire is dominating power."⁶⁶

This inborn aggressiveness of the Bonapartist state was already predicted with great foresight by Alexis de Tocqueville in May 1852—five

months *before* Napoleon III gave his speech in Bordeaux in which he reassured the world that his empire was an empire of peace. "Why the military spirit of the army, reigning alone in the absence of every political spirit in the nation, would not be satisfied?" wrote Tocqueville. "All this will inevitably push the new government toward war."⁶⁷ He proved to be right. Napoleon III's reign was characterized by a long series of wars and interventions that sharply contrasted with the almost 40 years of permanent peace that preceded his reign. The Crimean War was followed by the conquest of Senegal, the Second Opium War, the Cochinchina campaign, the Second Italian War of Independence, the Franco-Mexican War, campaigns in Korea and in Japan, and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 where Napoleon III, finally, found his Waterloo in Sedan. Napoleon III "*has* to make war, he *has* to make conquests, if not only to subsist," wrote Rubel.⁶⁸ This inbuilt aggressiveness and militarism of both Bonapartist regimes in France was at the same time also their greatest weakness. An aggressive "colossus with feet of clay, the Bonapartist regime cannot survive military defeat."⁶⁹ "In the case of Napoleon, everything passes as if the regime in place betrays itself when it does not seek the glory under the fire of cannons. It is like being pushed to Austerlitz or Magenta; and, finally, to Waterloo or Sedan."⁷⁰

Putin's regime, equally, shows the tendency to project the tensions its repressive rule generates in Russian society to outside enemies. The regime found its legitimation in the Second Chechen War. It took nine years to bring this to a formal, preliminary end. The war in Georgia took five days, but was prepared years in advance. Both wars ended in "victories." But instead of bringing the regime the respect it was looking for, its sabre-rattling instigated only the fear of its neighbors and damaged its image in the West. Militarist Bonapartist regimes appear outwardly strong, but are internally fragile. Such fragile regimes are prone to take adventurous risks. Born in violence they often end in violence.

Discussion

The similarities between the political systems of Napoleon III and Putin are many and striking. "Caesarist identifications can play a role in history the moment when the situation of the masses is objectively endangered, when the masses are incapable of understanding the historical process, and when the fear that is activated by manipulation becomes a neurotic paranoia," wrote Franz Neumann.⁷¹ Louis Napoleon Bonaparte's coup was successful because the bourgeoisie and the farmers felt threatened by the revolutionary urban proletariat and wanted a

strong leader to impose order and a national consensus. Putin came to power in an unstable Russia, severely hit by the economic crisis of 1998. He equally responded to a popular need for a strong leadership that would restore order and rebuild a national consensus. Both leaders manipulated the masses by activating fears: Napoleon III the fear of the proletariat, Putin the fear of Chechen terrorists. Between Napoleon and Putin there seems, however, to be one important difference: Putin did not come into power by staging a coup. However, we have to make two reservations. The first is that Napoleon III did not *come* into power by staging a coup, but he *remained* in power, having come to power as a democratically elected president. The second reservation is that Putin's coup, in a certain way, was already made for him by his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, when Yeltsin attacked the Supreme Soviet in October 1993, disbanded it and made a new constitution that was adopted by the population in a plebiscitary way. This coup staged by Yeltsin served Putin in an indirect way: by providing a new constitution that installed a strong presidency. However, in order to consolidate his power, Putin needed more: the start of the Second Chechen War that made the population rally behind him. Thereafter, he could maintain his grip on power in a more subtle way: first by making Medvedev his successor for the "interim period" between 2008 and 2012, and, second, by a change to the constitution that was rushed through parliament in the fall of 2008, prolonging the presidential term from four to six years, which gave him theoretically the possibility to be elected twice for a total period of 12 years.

An interesting point is the internal development of Napoleon III's regime which started to liberalize after 1860. Is such a development possible in Russia? We have already pointed to the fact that the Second Empire, although it certainly was a police state, was a pre-totalitarian state. Putin's Russia, on the contrary, is a post-totalitarian state. It is not only the heir of the tsarist police state, but also of the totalitarian communist state. Its secret police has never been disbanded, nor has it been reformed. On the contrary, the representatives of this totalitarian secret police took the power in 1999 and have sworn to never surrender it. They started wars to legitimize their rule, destroyed the still fragile democratic structures, and installed a repressive regime. The chance that liberalization will take place—as was the case in the Second Empire—is not likely as long as the present ruling group of *siloviki* remains in power. The only positive point is that the external appearance of democracy and freedom that the present regime wants to maintain, obliges it at least to respect some minimal standards.

Repression of the last remaining independent newspapers or radio stations and the imposition of Internet censorship would remove the last fig leaf of the regime. One cannot disregard the possibility that in a crisis situation the accumulated dissatisfaction of the population could turn against the present leadership.⁷² Even the support of many oligarchs seems ambiguous. If they want to defend their property rights they have a clear interest in an independent judiciary that can protect them against the arbitrariness of the state.

11

Putinism and Berlusconi

Let's talk about football and women.¹

Silvio Berlusconi

Berlusconi and Putin: The friendship of two Botoxed politicians

When Berlusconi became Italian Prime Minister on June 11, 2001 (for the second time), Putin succeeded in establishing a—very—close personal relationship with the new Italian leader. He and his wife Lyudmila soon became welcome guests at Berlusconi's summer residence in Porto Rotondo in Sardinia and Putin even sent in 2002 his two teenage daughters Misha and Katya there to spend their summer holidays. According to the local Sardinian newspaper *La nuova Sardegna* Putin felt so at ease in Sardinia that he bought in 2003 a €10-million property in Porto Cervo, a resort that is extremely popular among Russian billionaires. But Putin was prudent enough not to put the property in his own name.² Sharing holidays and the fact of being almost neighbors in the Italian island, strengthened their mutual bond. The personal chemistry between the two men was so excellent that Anna Politkovskaya, ironically, wrote that Berlusconi “appears to have fallen in love with Putin.”³ Berlusconi became in a sense Putin's self-appointed ambassador in Europe and he “once went so far as to describe himself as Russia's ‘advocate’ in the EU.”⁴ Berlusconi was even more than a simple “ambassador” or “advocate.” Nikolay Petrov of the Moscow Carnegie Center placed Berlusconi in Putin's “inner circle” of his 12 most intimate partners.⁵ According to Quentin Peel of the *Financial Times*, the two men “share more in their political style than one might expect: both like to shock, Mr. Berlusconi with crude jokes and Mr. Putin with

crude language. Both are small men, vain about their appearance, who have ruled their countries through tight-knit groups of confidants.”⁶ Another resemblance is that both men liked to show off their virility in ostentatious and often shameless ways that evoked Mussolini’s fascist style. In Berlusconi’s case it is the virility of the Latin lover and womanizer. In Putin’s case the virility of the sportsman, eager to let himself be photographed as a bare-chested horse rider, a pilot in a cockpit, or driving a racing car: always anxious to expose in a narcissistic way his physical strength and audacity. One author commented on this display of virility that “Berlusconi and Putin [were] representing both sides of the fascist man: penis and muscles.”⁷ The obsession of both men with their bodies is, indeed, legendary. Berlusconi has “remade” himself with a hair transplant, retouched eyelids, and botox injections. One could expect that it was only a question of time before Putin would follow the lead of his Italian friend, 16 years his senior. In September 2011, Putin made a wrinkle-free appearance at the party conference of United Russia for the first time. The Russian political scientist Stanislav Belkovsky claimed “to have been the first to evoke Putin’s interest in Botox and aesthetical surgery.”⁸ According to experts, Putin underwent a facelift which included cheek-fillers, a brow-lift, removal of bags under his eyes and Botox.⁹ Janek Stanek, one of the UK’s top cosmetic surgeons commented: “Unfortunately, it has made him look a little odd. By lifting the brow so much it has a feminising effect, which is not what you want.”¹⁰ Michael Prager, another cosmetic surgeon, said: “He has perhaps had a little bit too much work to the eyes because he has what we call ‘fish eyes’ or ‘dead eyes’. They look empty because he is unable to express his emotions through his eyes, because the muscles have been paralysed.”¹¹ However, it had already been noticed years *before* his cosmetic surgery that Putin’s eyes were unable to express emotions. In 2007, the reporter of *Time* magazine wrote that “no one is born with a stare like Vladimir Putin’s.” “The Russian President’s pale blue eyes are so cool, so devoid of emotion that the stare must have begun as an affect, the gesture of someone who understood that power might be achieved by the suppression of ordinary needs, like blinking.”¹² The stare, wrote the reporter, made talking to the President “often chilling.”

The result of Putin’s and Berlusconi’s cosmetic surgery is open for discussion. While Stanek observed a “feminising effect” caused by Putin’s lifted eyebrows, Marco Belpoliti made a similar remark on Berlusconi’s hair transplant. “The hair transplant of the leader of Forza Italia,” he wrote, “confirms that he adheres to a feminine model which associates, according to traditional canons, sexuality and hair. An index

of his feminisation? Partially yes.”¹³ In Italy, the body cult, introduced by Berlusconi, has no equivalent in post-war politics. One has to return to the time of Mussolini to find a similar emphasis on the body of the leader. “Berlusconi,” wrote Belpoliti, “has apparently more than one resemblance with Mussolini. Not so much from the political point of view—the post-modern populism of Berlusconi has no equivalent in Italian history—as concerning his use of image, even if things are not restricted to that. Above all, Berlusconi is the first Italian politician since Mussolini who has cultivated his own image so permanently and with so much continuity.”¹⁴ *Mutatis mutandis* the same is true for Putin. No Russian or Soviet leader before him has been so concerned about cultivating his body image. Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev, and Yeltsin were all Soviet apparatchiks, formed in the mold of the Communist Party. They were rather counter-examples of such bodily image. Lacking a model in Russia, the only historical reference which remains for Putin is equally Mussolini. As a leader who wants to present the ideal body to his countrymen—particularly, but not only, to the female population—Putin elicits equivalent bodily expressions among the population. In Russia female journalism students posed half naked for a “Putin calendar” while Russian teenage girls published love letters in their blogs, praising “ideal man” Putin. In Italy, Berlusconi evoked a less spontaneous response in the female population, but he was apparently able to compensate for this in his “bunga bunga” parties.

The friendship between the two men was not only a personal affair. It had also important political and economic dimensions. Berlusconi would become one of Putin’s staunchest defenders after the Russian invasion in Georgia. Both men would also show themselves to be very apt at closing business deals. It was during Berlusconi’s second government (June 11, 2001–May 17, 2006) that a deal between the Italian state energy company ENI and the Russian state company Gazprom was prepared, creating an international alliance for joint projects and extending the duration of the contract to supply ENI with gas up until 2035. According to ENI’s website, this was “confirming ENI as Gazprom’s most important client in the world.”¹⁵ The deal was signed in November 2006 under Berlusconi’s successor, Romano Prodi. With the return of Berlusconi as Italian Prime Minister in May 2008, the Russian-Italian relationship, based on the old Putin-Berlusconi friendship, received a new impetus. In December 2010 WikiLeaks published cables in which the US ambassador in Rome, Ronald Spogli, spoke about the dark sides of the Putin-Berlusconi relationship. In January 2009 Spogli wrote that “contacts in both the opposition centre-left Partito

Democratico and Berlusconi's own PdL Party (...) have hinted at a more nefarious connection. They believe that Berlusconi and his cronies are profiting personally and handsomely from many of the energy deals between Italy and Russia."¹⁶ And he added: "The Georgian ambassador in Rome has told us that the government of Georgia believes Putin has promised Berlusconi a percentage of profits from any pipelines developed by Gazprom in co-ordination with ENI."¹⁷

Putinism and Berlusconi: Some striking similarities

The deep personal friendship between Vladimir Putin and Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was a question of personal chemistry and style. It was equally a question of *political* chemistry because there were some striking resemblances between the political systems created by both leaders, even when one takes the quite different national and historical contexts of their respective countries into account. Berlusconi has created in Italy a personal and quasi-authoritarian regime that, from its start, consistently attacked the very foundations of liberal parliamentary democracy. Umberto Bossi, leader of the—equally populist—Lega Nord, used to call him *BerlusKaiser*.¹⁸ The prominent Italian political philosopher Norberto Bobbio did not hesitate to use the word "despotism" to characterize Berlusconi's regime which did not respect Montesquieu's division of powers. Not only was Berlusconi's regime based on a potentially dangerous accumulation of political and economic power, but equally on an accumulation of cultural power via a quasi monopoly of the mass media—especially the TV.¹⁹ Berlusconi—like Putin—treated his political adversaries not as the legal opposition, but—in the tradition of Carl Schmitt—as enemies, with whom no compromises were possible. According to him, they were all "communists." If one voted for them, he said, it would be the last time there would be a free election. Berlusconi's "foes" were omnipresent: in the parliament, in the media, and in the institutions of the state. Judges in particular, who opened investigations into the shady deals in which the prime minister was involved, were accused of being communists and Berlusconi did everything, from changing the law to paying bribes, to curb the power of the judiciary and bring it under the control of the executive, that is, himself.

Putin, who during his first years in power had brought the independent TV channels in his country under the control of the Kremlin or Kremlin-friendly oligarchs could only have understanding for Berlusconi, although he did not have similar problems with an independent

judiciary. This for the simple reason that in Russia an independent judiciary did not exist. Both regimes were characterized by a power-hungry executive, constantly trying to subordinate other power centers that were considered mere obstacles. In Italy, these obstacles were the judiciary, the constitutional court, and the president. In Russia it was the independent TV channels, the regional governors, and independent oligarchs, such as Vladimir Gusinsky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, or Boris Berezovsky, who were sidelined, imprisoned, or forced to leave the country. Both leaders had the same urge to rewrite history. Not only did Putin introduce new history books in secondary education, Berlusconi did the same. "Italian school textbooks are to be rewritten," wrote Paul Ginsborg, "on the grounds that they are too left-wing. Henceforth they are to follow 'objective criteria which respect historical truth.'"²⁰

Apart from the similarities between their centralizing and power-hungry executives, a similarity between their respective political parties could also be observed. Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia, was a party without a program which lacked an internal party democracy. The party was managed top-down as a company and totally built around the person of its founder and financier Silvio Berlusconi. The party combined modern capitalist management and feudal personal dependence. In 1993, when Berlusconi founded the party, he was "the owner of the party and the activists are his employees."²¹ Forza Italia was, in fact, a *non-party* of which the only goal was to support its leader and bring him to power. The resemblance with United Russia is striking. Also this party did not have a clear program. Its ultimate goal was to support Putin. Although Putin did not found the party, his presidential administration was directly involved in its creation. By becoming chairman without being a formal member, Putin had the same iron grip on United Russia as Berlusconi on Forza Italia. For both men, the party was not the promoter of a commonly formulated project, but a tool for their personal power ambitions. Berlusconi could manipulate elections in Italy by his incommensurate financial power and his control of three of the six national TV channels to which were added the three public TV stations during the time that he was in power. Putin, in Russia, could do the same.

Berlusconi and Mussolini

Berlusconi's regime has often been compared with Mussolini's. Berlusconi fulfilled a similar demand in the population for a "strong man" as existed in the 1920s.²² On several occasions Berlusconi has made positive

remarks on the *Duce*. In an interview with two British journalists in 2003 he went so far as to call Mussolini's regime a "benign dictatorship," adding "Mussolini did not murder anyone. Mussolini sent people on holiday to confine them [banishment to small islands]." ²³ In May 2010, at a news conference at the OECD in Paris, he even seemed to identify himself with the Duce when he told an astounded audience: "I will dare to quote you a phrase from someone considered a dictator, a great, powerful dictator, Benito Mussolini. In his diary, I recently read this phrase. 'They say I have power. It isn't true. Maybe my party officials do. But I don't now. All I can do is say to my horse go right or left. And I have to be happy with that.'" ²⁴ Berlusconi has never hidden his sympathies for the extreme right. In the 1980s, he was a paid-up member of Licio Gelli's secret Masonic lodge "Propaganda 2" (P-2), an organization that had links with members of the junta in Argentina. P-2 was, according to a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry a "secret criminal organization" and accused of "undermining democracy." Berlusconi was indeed the first European politician who openly supported a neo-fascist party and helped it gain respectability. In 1993 he supported Gianfranco Fini's bid to become mayor of Rome. Fini was then the leader of the MSI, the Italian neo-fascist party. Fini declared at that time that Mussolini was "the greatest statesman of the twentieth century." One year later, Berlusconi would invite the MSI to be a coalition partner in his first government. The paradox is that Fini would later abjure his former opinions ²⁵ and steer his party—in 1995 renamed into *Alleanza Nazionale*—into the democratic mainstream, while Berlusconi's behavior would become increasingly erratic and anti-democratic. ²⁶

A centralizing, power-hungry executive, a disregard for the division of powers, a political party organized around a charismatic leader, an opposition that is treated as an enemy of the state, an electorate manipulated by a media monopoly, elections that have the character of plebiscites—all this is in itself not new. It existed already during the regimes of Napoleon III and Mussolini. However, *the means* of manipulation were new. Napoleon III used the press, Mussolini the radio and film, Berlusconi depended on the control of TV. His rule was characterized by Norberto Bobbio as an authoritarian videocracy. ²⁷ In his book *Salviamo Italia* (Let us save Italy), the Anglo-Italian historian Paul Ginsborg wrote that "Italy has a very particular role in the modern world: that of inventing from time to time new dictatorial models. In the 1920s fascism was the first example of a contemporary mass tyranny that was imitated on a broad scale and developed itself in the twenty years that followed. Today one recognizes ever more, although

late, that the years in power of Silvio Berlusconi are not simply a passing phenomenon, but are founded on a new type of regime, that is formally democratic but in reality strongly controlled from above. This regime is a far cry from that of Benito Mussolini as concerns the use of physical force (...) but it is rather similar in the extraordinary manipulation of public opinion."²⁸

Berlusconi's regime is, indeed, a new model that risks in the coming years to be followed elsewhere in Europe. A similar observation has been made by another author, Raffaele Simone, in his interesting book *Il mostro mite* (The Gentle Monster) in which he analyzed the emergence of the new right in Europe. This new right, he wrote, "is not an evolution of the conventional right [regimes]: it is not fascism, it is not Salazarism, it is not Franquism, it is not a dictatorship of the colonels. It is even less Nazism, even when for purely electoral reasons it does not hesitate to ally itself with groups of this signature. It neither practices, nor preaches one of the behaviours of the Hard Right [regimes] of the twentieth century (...): the imprisonment of adversaries and the confiscation of their possessions, confinement, military invasion of neighboring countries, colonialism, militarism, the repression of civil rights and the press, paramilitaries, and even less concentration camps."²⁹ In today's world, this would have negative effects because the world would immediately be informed by the Internet and the omnipresent television. Therefore the techniques to eliminate adversaries have become more sophisticated and more adapted to modern times: "that is to say bloodless, although they can be devastative: professional isolation, denigration and mockery also in the media, *damnatio memoriae*, inflicting economic harm, judicial harassment, political marginalization."³⁰ In short, "The New Right 'does not destruct, but prevents [adversaries] from developing.'"³¹ This strategy was used by Berlusconi. It was equally used by Putin, who changed the electoral laws, heightened the election threshold, refused to register opposition parties, thereby equally preventing adversaries from developing. Putin's regime used the same "soft" means to eliminate its adversaries although it did not refrain from using hard repression.

Globalization and the ethos of personal enrichment

Putinism and Berlusconiism share another characteristic that was absent in inter-war fascism: this is their full acceptance of economic globalization. The fascist systems of the inter-war era strove for economic autarchy. The same was true in the 1930s for the communist Soviet

Union, although for the latter this was less a question of principle than of *force majeure*.³² Putin's and Berlusconi's embrace of globalization is accompanied by a value system that is fed and nourished by globalization, a value system that, as such, was absent in classical fascism: the goal of personal enrichment. The new right, wrote Simone, is developing within a modern society in which collective ideals have been replaced by a growing individualism. The fascist regimes of the inter-war era preached martial, military virtues, discipline, and the sacrifice of the individual for the collective. When they stressed enrichment, it was the *collective* enrichment of the nation by the colonization of conquered peoples. The modern new right, however, is a child of its time. It does not preach collective, but individual enrichment. Berlusconi's popularity in Italy was not in the last place based on his status as one of Italy's richest men: he was a role model for the ordinary Italian. Like Louis Philippe, the French "bourgeois-king," he told his fellow citizens: "You should do what I did: Enrichissez-vous" (Enrich yourselves). In reality, however, it was not Italy's population that enriched itself, but the political and economical elite. Antonio Gibelli estimated that Berlusconi's property has multiplied ten times since he started his political career.³³

And it is here that another interesting parallel can be observed in the situation in present-day Russia, because the Russian elite, too, including Putin himself, is motivated by this ethos of individual enrichment. Unlike the Soviet nomenklatura that enjoyed many material privileges but could neither possess state property, nor transfer it to its children, the new political and economic class has made the slogan "enrich yourself" into a new dogma. The profits of state companies are siphoned off by creating shady intermediaries that make big profits for their often unknown shareholders. The opposition leader Garry Kasparov—wittingly—remarked: "Putin wants to rule like Stalin but live like Abramovich,"³⁴ referring to Roman Abramovich, the Russian billionaire oil trader who is the owner of London's Chelsea soccer team. Rumors emerge regularly about Putin's personal possessions. These rumors are systematically denied by Putin's aides and by himself. In 2007, the Russian political scientist Stanislav Belkovsky revealed that Putin would have acquired \$40 billion during his eight-years rule. According to Belkovsky Putin would control a 37 percent stake in Surgutneftegaz, an oil company, 4.5 percent of Gazprom, and about 50 percent of Gunvor, an oil trading company, based in Geneva.³⁵ If these revelations were true Putin would be the richest man in Europe. The Gunvor company is an interesting case. This firm has two main shareholders, Torbjörn Törnqvist, a Swedish citizen, and Gennady Timchenko, who

has a Finnish passport, but was born in the Soviet Union. Timchenko was estimated by Forbes in 2010 to possess \$1.9 billion. "Unknown when Mr. Putin came to power in 2000," wrote the *Wall Street Journal*, "Mr. Timchenko's company, Gunvor Group, is now one of the top players in the business of selling and transporting Russian oil."³⁶ According to the authors, "there are persistent whispers in Russian business and foreign intelligence circles that Mr. Timchenko, like Mr. Putin, served in the KGB."³⁷ Both men know each other well and are on friendly terms. In the early 1990s, Timchenko was the co-founder of a judo club in Saint Petersburg of which Putin is the honorary president. The business of Gunvor, founded in 1997, has skyrocketed in recent years. Its biggest clients are two state companies, Gazprom Neft and Rosneft. In 2006 Gunvor exported Russian oil and oil products worth \$30 billion. In 2007, sales increased to \$43 billion,³⁸ in 2009 to \$53 billion and in 2010 to \$65 billion.³⁹ This meant that sales doubled in only four years. Already in 2004, presidential candidate Ivan Rybkin accused Putin of secret personal business deals in which Timchenko would play a prominent role.⁴⁰ In December 2010, WikiLeaks published a diplomatic cable from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow which mentioned "the very large profits" of Gunvor, together with "its secretive ownership, which is rumoured to include prime minister Putin."⁴¹

When, in 2008, *The Economist* published an article in which allusions were made to a possible connection between Putin and Gunvor, the weekly was sued and obliged to publish an apology in which was said that "we accept Gunvor's assurances that neither Vladimir Putin nor other senior Russian political figures have any ownership interest in Gunvor."⁴² This formulation, however, still left open the possibility that interests other than property interests were involved. It is also a curious fact that the same Timchenko is a shareholder of the Bank Rossiya, a small, local bank in Saint Petersburg, which, too, has shown an unprecedented, miraculous growth. On January 1, 2000—at the beginning of Putin's rule—its net profits were zero. Seven years later, its net profits were \$34.4 million.⁴³ According to the *Moscow Times*, "there is still work to do if Rossiya is to escape a perception spread by Putin's critics that the bank is a front for Putin. The critics claim that the bank has managed his personal finances since at least 2004."⁴⁴ When, in February 2008, Putin was asked about media speculation that he might have accumulated a great personal fortune through opaque deals, he "resorted to gutter slang, lambasting the reports as snot 'picked out of someone's nose and smeared on bits of paper.'"⁴⁵ Also other members of the Russian government are suspected to profit generously from

business links. When, in April 2011 Medvedev announced that from July 1, 2011, government members should no longer be represented on the boards of state companies, this referred to no less than 17 members of the Russian government.⁴⁶ They included Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin, who headed Rosneft; Minister of Finance Aleksey Kudrin, who was president of the board of the bank VTB; Transport Minister Igor Levitin, who was president of the board of Aeroflot; and First Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov, who presided over the board of Gazprom and the agricultural bank Rosselkhozbank. It was doubted that Medvedev's measure, if it were to be applied, would mean more than a cosmetic change because the ministers concerned would, in their role as members of the government, retain an important influence in the respective companies.

Globalization and the Mafia

Another—important—resemblance between the regimes of Putin and Berlusconi concerns their alleged—often close—relationship with the Mafia. It is a peculiarity which they do not even share with the regime of Mussolini. When Mussolini became Italian Prime Minister, one of his targets was the Sicilian Mafia. In Mussolini's *statismo*—his belief in a strong, almighty, and centralized state—there was no room for rival power centers and certainly not for the Mafia, which, in Sicily, openly challenged the authority of the state. In October 1925 Mussolini appointed Cesare Mori prefect of Sicily with special powers to destroy the Mafia. The “Iron Prefect” was soon feared for his forceful and ruthless methods. Suspects were tortured, their property confiscated, and their families were taken hostage. Thousands of Mafiosi were arrested. Mussolini's hard approach aroused admiration abroad. The American magazine *Time* wrote: “Not until the advent of Signor Mussolini and his Fascist! has any government dared to put down their wholesale lawlessness, although many half-hearted attempts have been made.”⁴⁷ The magazine observed a new phenomenon: “Prisoners were brought into court in iron-barred cages and arranged around the room like wild animals.”⁴⁸ In 1928, three years after the operation began, more than 11,000 suspects were arrested of which over 1200 were convicted and imprisoned. After the operation, the murder rate in Sicily declined. The Fascist government boasted its success. We know now that this success was only temporary and that the Italian Mafia is like an octopus: each time one cuts one tentacle, another will grow back. Often this persistence of the Mafia has been ascribed to a supposed special “psychology”

or “culture” of the Sicilians. But there exists neither an apparent psychological predisposition for Sicilians to generate a Mafia, nor a cultural fatality to do so. The great majority of ordinary Sicilians, who are the victims, are against the Mafia. Some of the great anti-Mafia crusaders, such as the courageous—and murdered—public persecutors Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, were Sicilians. In an interesting article⁴⁹ Federico Varese has pointed to the sociological causes of the Mafia phenomenon. Varese emphasized the fact that the Mafia emerged in Sicily together with the end of feudalism in the nineteenth century. In this period of emerging democracy, a huge redistribution of property took place from feudal into private hands.⁵⁰ However, the state was unable to enforce the new property rights, which led to many attacks. The new owners turned for protection to non-state actors, mostly disbanded soldiers or former members of the private armies of the feudal nobility. It was these private protection providers who are the ancestors of today’s Mafiosi. The Mafia, therefore, is the consequence of a parallel process: the end of the monopoly over private property and an increase in people owning assets, while the state is unable to guarantee and enforce property rights. The new owners, who are powerless, demand the protection of private security providers or are “offered” protection.

And here comes the interesting parallel with the emergence of the Mafia in post-Soviet Russia. In Russia also, a huge redistribution of property took place. Yeltsin’s Decree on Free Trade of January 23, 1991, led to a first wave of privatization. By January 1993, 49,770 peasant farms had been privatized. In April of the same year 5,300,000 apartments and houses had been transferred to private hands. At the end of 1993 82,000 enterprises were privatized. This extensive privatization took place in a juridical vacuum. There were many conflicting laws, applied differently by overlapping jurisdictions, leading to a great uncertainty concerning the property rights. In addition, the state was not capable of guaranteeing and enforcing the new property rights. Crime rates exploded. In 1992, the number of murders rose by 69.8 percent.⁵¹ As in the case of Sicily, this led to a growing demand for private protection. There was not only a demand, but also a supply. At the end of January 1992 the new KGB chief Viktor Barannikov had announced a cut of the staff from 36,000 to 2,800. Also, the Russia armed forces were reduced: with 40,000 to 50,000 officers per year. Former KGB agents and army officers who had lost their jobs found new employment in the private protection services. It is these private protection services that soon began to play an important role in the emergence of the Russian Mafia.

Apart from the structural resemblances between the emergence of the Italian and Russian Mafias, there are resemblances regarding the relationship that the Putin and Berlusconi governments allegedly entertained with their local Mafias. Berlusconi's government showed, like Mussolini's, an urge to strengthen the executive vis-à-vis other power centers. However, right from the beginning, it entertained a different relationship with organized crime. The time of the *mani pulite* ('clean hands') campaigns of the 1990s against the Mafia had definitively passed. Berlusconi, whose economic activities came under scrutiny of the judges, started an all-out war against the judiciary. During Berlusconi's rule, "the continuous expansion of criminal organizations in the whole peninsula" could be observed.⁵² The time that the Mafia had restricted its activities to Sicily and Southern Italy was definitively over. There are, wrote Ginsborg, "ever more numerous links between criminal groups and the economy in the centre and the north of the country," which is the "proof of the advancement of a cancer."⁵³ There were many indications of contacts between the political elite of Italy with the Mafia. One of Berlusconi's close advisers, the Sicilian Marcello dell'Utri, collaborated with the Mafia until 1992 and was later sentenced to seven years imprisonment. Dell'Utri was the co-founder of Forza Italia and an Italian MP, Member of the European Parliament, and Senator. There are also presumptions that Berlusconi built his media empire with Mafia money.⁵⁴ In the 1970s, Berlusconi employed Vittorio Mangano, a convicted *Mafioso* from a powerful clan in Palermo, on his county estate near Milan for two years.⁵⁵ The Russian Mafia is also expanding. It is no less violent than its Italian counterpart and it is fully riding the waves of globalization. Experts do not hesitate to characterize Russia as a "mafia state". Moisés Naím wrote that Russia is a country, "where the line between government agencies and criminal groups has been irreparably blurred."⁵⁶ This view is shared by the Spanish prosecutor José Grinda, according to whom the "tremendous control" of the Russian mafia over a number of strategic sectors of the global economy, such as aluminum and natural gas, is made possible by the extent to which the Kremlin cooperates with criminal organizations.⁵⁷ The well-known Russian sociologist Olga Kryshtanovskaya compared Putin with a mafia godfather and Medvedev with his juridical adviser.⁵⁸ Against this background, the allegations, made in the WikiLeaks cables, about corrupt financial links between Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Russian leader Vladimir Putin were not totally unexpected. In the leaked telegrams, US diplomats in Rome aired the suspicion that Berlusconi could be profiting personally from the cooperation of the Italian energy company ENI with

Gazprom in the South Stream pipeline project.⁵⁹ This evokes Mikhail Khodorkovsky's warning. He wrote: "My country is a huge exporter of two kinds of commodities. The first export is hydrocarbons, crude oil and natural gas. The second is corruption. In previous years, the victims of Russia's exported corruption were certain European and American political leaders. Not that long ago, some of them seemed unassailable and incorruptible, but alas, this turned out to be not so."⁶⁰ In November 2011, during a Valdai conference, Putin was asked what model he saw for Russia's future. "The West-European model he chose to cite," wrote the *New York Times*, "caused a few jaws to drop: His 'good friend' Silvio Berlusconi, he said, was a true political giant—'definitely one of the last Mohicans in European politics.'⁶¹ However, against the background of the similarities between Putinism and Berlusconiism, Putin's remark, rather than cause "a few jaws to drop," was, in fact, completely appropriate. It expressed not only the friendship Putin felt for the Italian prime minister, but also his affinity with the political system Berlusconi had put in place in Italy.

12

Putinism: A Hybrid Mixture of Mussolinian Fascism, Bonapartism, and Berlusconiism

Putinism is a system of its own kind

It is time to conclude our investigation into the defining elements of Putinism. From the beginning of Putin's rule, analysts have struggled how to define his regime. It was extremely difficult to grasp its essence and it could certainly not be subsumed under existing categories. Putinism seemed to present a system of its kind, a totally new political formation that challenged existing political models. It soon became clear that Putin himself was neither the "crystal clear democrat" (*lupenreiner Demokrat*), which his friend Gerhard Schröder wanted to see in him, nor a simple autocrat or a new reincarnation of Mussolini. Although there were certain resemblances between his system and the fascist systems of the inter-war era, especially with Mussolini's Italy, these resemblances remained only partial. So what exactly is Putinism? Many Western observers have expressed their unease and *malaise* with this new kind of regime which neither resembled the former Soviet model, nor a Western-style democracy. The situation can be compared with the 1920s when Mussolini introduced his new political system in Italy. Also then, foreign observers did not exactly know how to assess the new phenomenon. "People often did not feel sure," wrote Karl Polanyi, "whether a political speech or a play, a sermon or a public parade, a metaphysics or an artistic fashion, a poem or a party program was fascist or not. There were no accepted criteria of fascism, nor did it possess conventional tenets."¹ Even Western statesmen were at odds. According to Pierre Milza, "there is no doubt, judging by his public declarations back in the 1920s and early 1930s that Churchill was a fan of Mussolini. Roosevelt too."² History seemed to repeat itself when, in June 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush looked into Putin's eyes

and made a positive assessment of his Russian counterpart. It was only years later that a clearer picture of the new system in Mussolini's Italy arose. We find ourselves in a similar situation with Putinism. Garry Kasparov, the world chess champion who became one of the leaders of Russia's "non systemic" opposition, wrote that Putin's system was "not martial law exactly, call it 'martial law lite.' (...) Mussolini employed this method to impose fascism in Italy in the 1920s. Even with such recent examples before us we allow it to happen over and over. We exchange our freedoms for promises of security and when that security fails to be delivered we are told it's because we have yet to give up enough freedom."³ Kasparov's characterization of Putinism as "martial law lite" comes close to its essence. In the West, however, there are still people who continue to call Putin a "democrat," although these have become a rapidly dwindling minority.⁴ However, calling Putin's system simply "fascist" does not do justice to its complex and multi-layered character. Putinism is a totally new political formation. It is a multi-layered political formation which combines elements of Bonapartism, "classical" inter-war era fascism (especially of the Mussolinian variant), and modern Berlusconi populism. The fact that Putinism contains elements from these three systems does not mean that Putin consciously constructed his system from these elements, nor was he directly or indirectly influenced by these systems, although Berlusconi's direct influence on certain aspects of his system cannot be dismissed, since both are not only contemporaries, but also close friends. However, as I said, Putin might have been unaware of these resemblances. The analysis I have made in this book, therefore, does not pretend to be a historical reconstruction of the building blocks that were consciously used by Putin and his environment in order to build this new political system. My analysis rather provides some heuristic devices in order to better understand this still enigmatic system. In Table 12.1 I have grouped a number of elements under three headings in order to present them to the reader in a more coherent and transparent way.

Putinism is a right-wing radical system

In the preceding chapters we have followed a step-by-step approach. Starting with the "Weimar Parallel," we compared Putin's system with the fascist systems of the inter-war era. We have seen that Putinism shared with these systems an ultra-nationalist ideology in which ideas of national rebirth dominate. This would be enough for Putinism to qualify for Roger Griffin's "thin" definition of the "fascist minimum."

Table 12.1 Putinism—A multilayered combination of Bonapartism, Berlusconiism, and (Mussolinian) fascism

Bonapartism	Berlusconiism	(Mussolinian fascism)
Authoritarian government with democratic façade	Fully accepts globalization	Ultra-nationalist ideology
Relative independence of the state from economic bourgeoisie	Ethos of personal enrichment	Ideas of national rebirth
Reliance on secret police	Control of the media: “videocracy”	Aggressive foreign policy
Lack of clear ideology: Ideology is built post hoc	Flirtation with fascism	Imperialist drive
Symbiotic relationship between the regime and the majority religion	Party without a program: the party is a vehicle for the leader	
Goal is restoration of national prestige	“Body obsession”: the leader as “Botoxed politician”	
State-led modernization	Alleged relations with the mafia	
Military adventures	Rewrites school history text books	
Not totalitarian		
No official “state-racism”		

Putinism also fulfilled the criteria of my own, extended, definition that included an aggressive foreign policy and expansionism, as was shown in the invasion of Georgia and the subsequent dismemberment of this small neighboring country. Putinism shared with Mussolinian fascism the macho style of the leader and a disregard for human rights, as was shown in the way in which the war in Chechnya was conducted.

However, at the same time there also existed big differences with the systems of the inter-war era, such as the tolerance of (a restricted number) of free media outlets, the absence of an official racist ideology, the absence of party militias, and the formal maintenance of a multi-party system. This brought us to compare Putin’s system with another

political model: the Bonapartism of Napoleon III. Here we observed three important similarities: first, the maintenance of an electoral democracy and a formal multi-party system; second, the possibility of airing grievances and voice opposition by allowing a (small) critical press to survive; and third, the symbiotic relationship between the regime and the country's majority religion. Other elements of Bonapartism that were shared by Putinism were the relative independence of the state from the economy, the presence of a repressive secret police, the absence—initially—of a clear ideology, which was constructed *post hoc*, and a state-led modernization, including an emphasis on a strong, modern army. Most of these last elements, however, could equally be observed in the fascist systems of the inter-war era. It is, therefore, particularly the Bonapartist democratic façade and its pseudo-pluralism that gives Putinism a “softer” and modern appearance.

We continued our research by comparing Putinism with Berlusconiism, one of the most developed forms of modern populism. Here we saw that Putinism not only has assimilated elements from Bonapartism, but equally from contemporary Berlusconi-style populism.⁵ Berlusconi fully accepted economic globalization. Together with globalization he embraced its ethos of personal enrichment. In Putinist Russia we find the same embrace of globalization and its ethos of personal enrichment. In addition we find in both systems alleged links between the state bureaucracy and organized crime. In Russia, globalization is used to further the financial clan interests of the siloviki and Kremlin friendly oligarchs, who invest their huge financial assets abroad, acting, as it were, as an offshore aristocracy. This makes them not only different from the former communist nomenklatura, but also from the fascist leaders of the inter-war era.

The Putinist dynamic: Why we can expect a further radicalization of the regime

The big question is how Putinism will further develop in the coming years. In order to make a reliable prognosis we have to take into account the following six factors:

1. the immanent dynamic of Putinism;
2. the internal situation in Russia;
3. the specific historical moment when Putin's third presidency started;
4. the fact that Putin is a “Providential man under time pressure;”
5. the composition of Putin's team;
6. the measures that are already taken or being prepared.

The immanent dynamic of Putinism, as we have seen in Table 9.1, is characterized by a continuous urge to strengthen its centralist, authoritarian, and repressive tendencies. It is, therefore, counter-intuitive, to expect that this regime will take initiatives aimed at a liberalization of the system. Also the internal situation in Russia points to a repressive scenario. The mass demonstrations in the fall and winter of 2011–2012 have showed that Putin's honeymoon with the Russian population is over. Although he may still have the support of about half of the electorate, he will not be able to rebuild the broad popularity he enjoyed in the years 2000–2008. His authority will increasingly be challenged by protests of the educated and unruly middle classes in the big Russian cities. Also the specific moment of Putin's return as Russian president plays a role. Although President Medvedev was in most respects "his master's voice" whose main function was to act as Putin's "seatwarmer," this did not prevent Medvedev's presidency from being experienced by many Russians as a welcome softening of the regime. This sentiment was strengthened by Medvedev's "liberal" rhetoric and the way he emphasized the need for modernization. Russians were, therefore, clearly disappointed, when, in September 2011, Medvedev revealed that he had only been a stand-in for Putin. Russians know now that the period of the "Medvedev thaw" is definitively over and will only reluctantly adapt to the new situation. At the same time, Putin is under *time pressure*. More than 12 years have passed since he came to power and he knows that the clock is ticking. There is no doubt that he considers himself the savior of the Russian nation. He has ambitious plans for Russia's comeback as a great power. The "Eurasian Union" is only one of his projects. More important is his drive to bring the Slavic "brother nations" Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova, back in the Russian orbit. His offer to Belarus in 2003 to join the Russian Federation as six *oblasts* (which was refused by Lukashenko) suggests that his project for an imperial reconstitution is not free of irredentism.⁶ Putin will not allow anyone to derail this project of which he considers himself the god-sent messenger. In July 2011, the Kremlin ideologue Vladislav Surkov said—without irony: "I honestly believe that Putin was the person who was sent to Russia by fate and by God in the country's difficult hour for our greater, wider good,"⁷ echoing the words of pope Pius XI, who, in his time, saw in Mussolini "a man such as Providence has given us to meet." Providential men are not inclined to give in to demands that they consider futile, especially not when they are under the pressure of time. They let no-one interfere with their projects.

The fact that Putin prepares for playing hardball can be inferred from the composition of his government and the presidential administration. He appointed former NATO ambassador Rogozin, a hardline ultranationalist, deputy prime minister, and made Sergey Ivanov, a former deputy prime minister, who was Putin's KGB colleague in Saint Petersburg, head of the presidential administration. With his team he prepares concrete measures. In October 2011 the Defence Ministry announced plans to organize crash courses to train large numbers of snipers. By 2016 a total of 1000 snipers should be deployed, capable to kill the enemy at a distance of 1–2 kilometers. These snipers were not only useful in urban warfare. "Sharpshooters could also be deployed in the event of mass demonstrations (...), riots, or an Arab Spring type uprising."⁸ In the budget for 2012, 33 percent was reserved for defense and for the related "power" ministries. Salaries of security officers were augmented in order to boost their loyalty. At the same time the screws were tightened to prevent new demonstrations. On June 5, 2012 the Duma and the Federation Council approved a draft law imposing steep fines on people organizing "unsanctioned" meetings and demonstrations. Fines for individuals could be as much as \$9000—which is more than the average Russian annual salary (\$8500). Fines for organizations could be as much as \$30,000.⁹ A next step will be to tighten control of the Internet and social media. In 2011 the Internet portal Yandex had a daily audience of 24 to 26 million people, and VKontakte (the Russian equivalent Facebook) 20 million. The Russian blogosphere has doubled since 2008 and includes 7.4 million bloggers.¹⁰ Putin's regime considers this free space, especially when used by the younger generation, as extremely dangerous. In 2011 the Minister of Internal Affairs, Rashid Nurgaliyev, the prosecutor general, Yuriy Chaika, and Vasilii Yakemenko, head of the Russian government's youth organization *Rosmolodezh*, asked for increased control of the Internet.¹¹ The infrastructure for such a control is already in place. It is called SORM (*Sistema Operativno-Rozysknykh Meropriyatii*), "System of Operational Investigative Measures." This system was introduced in 1995. It gave the FSB the right to monitor all telecommunications, including the Internet. In order to make this control more effective, an additional regulation was introduced in 2005 which obliged Internet providers to install at their own expense a special device (costing between \$15,000 and \$100,000) on their servers which enabled the FSB to track at a distance, without entering the home of the provider, all communications and online transactions. The FSB had also access to passwords, identities, and addresses of the clients. These regulations were initially

kept semi-secret and were only made public on January 16, 2008, when "Order No. 9" was published by the Ministry of Communication.¹² Officially the secret service still needs a court decision for each instance of tapping, but because there exists a direct line to the local FSB bureau, which gives the FSB continuous access to all communications without the provider knowing when and whom the FSB is monitoring, there is in fact no external control. Because Russians in the former Soviet republics often use Russian providers, the FSB is able "to watch all the electronic correspondence that is sent and received at whatever place in the territory of the former Soviet Union."¹³ A law was signed by President Putin on July 21st, 2012, which forced NGOs receiving funding from abroad and engaging in 'political activity' to register with the Justice Ministry as 'inostrannyi agent' ('foreign agent'). The new law was preceded by attacks by Vladimir Putin on the work of what he called "pseudo-NGOs" in an article in *Moskovskie Novosti*¹⁴ and in a speech in December 2011 in which he attacked "so-called grant recipients", adding, "Judas is not the most respected biblical figure among our people."¹⁵ Putin's government not only started to harass critical NGOs and take their funding away, it especially wanted to *criminalize* their activities. This was put into effect on October 23, 2012, when the Duma amended articles 275 and 276 of the criminal code, introducing a much broader definition of 'treason'. Treason was no longer limited to illegally handing over secret information to foreign governments, it now also included providing "consultation to Western and international organizations". The draft bill was presented before the Duma by Yuriy Gorbunov, Deputy Director of the FSB. Rachel Denber, a Deputy Director at Human Rights Watch, wrote: "Now, if this proposed definition becomes law (...) even advocacy to promote change could land you in jail."¹⁶ She added: "I can't help but hear the faint but creepy echo of the old article 58 of the Soviet criminal code, which was commonly used against dissidents."¹⁷ However, not only the Russian population has to prepare for a worsening political climate. The same is true for the small neighboring states that want to keep their independence, and the West which will be confronted with a more aggressive and openly anti-American Russian foreign policy.

Notes

Preliminary remark on the notes: English quotes from original Russian, French, German, Dutch, and Italian texts have been translated by the author.

Introduction

1. George W. Bush, who mentioned this event in his memoirs, however, added: "In the years ahead, Putin would give me reasons to revise my opinion." G. W. Bush (2010) *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers), p. 196.
2. C. Caldwell (September 30, 2011) "Putin and his Timely Lessons for Western democrats," *Financial Times*.
3. J. Heilbrunn (October 5, 2011) "In Defense of Vladimir Putin," *The National Interest*.
4. "Guess Who!" (October 1, 2011), *The Economist*.
5. Cf. S. Levitsky and L. A. Way (April 2002) "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 51–65. Cf. also S. Levitsky and L. A. Way (2010) *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press).
6. Levitsky and Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," o.c., p. 54.
7. Ibid.
8. M. Mead (2001) *Russian Culture, The Study of Contemporary Western Cultures*, Vol. 3 (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books), p. 191.
9. R. Pipes (October 15, 2011) "The Coming Russian Winter," *The Economist*.
10. A. Konitzer (2005) *Voting for Russia's Governors: Regional Elections and Accountability under Yeltsin and Putin* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), p. xii.
11. Ibid., p. xiii. After the mass demonstrations of 2011 President Medvedev promised to re-introduce the direct elections for the regional governors. Under the new law, approved by the Duma on April 25, 2012, candidates should be nominated by political parties and have the support of 5 to 10 percent of the municipal lawmakers in at least three-fourths of the municipalities in the region. Independent candidates are allowed, but they must collect the signatures of 0.5 to 2 percent of the electorate. It is especially the provision in the law that gives the President of Russia the right "to hold consultations" with independent candidates before they are allowed to run, which, in the present conditions of Russia's pseudo-democracy, evokes doubt that these elections will be free and fair and not manipulated.
12. S. Mydans (October 1, 2011) "Putin's Eye for Power Leads Some in Russia to Ponder Life Abroad," *The New York Times*.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. "Guess Who!" *The Economist*, o.c.

16. Z. Brzezinski (September 20, 2004), "Moscow's Mussolini (How Putin is Creating a Fascist State)," *The Wall Street Journal*.
17. E. Chernenko (October 13, 2011), "France will secede from NATO," RT.
18. "Nations in Transit," 2012 Nations in Transit Data, *Freedom House*. Available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit-2012/overview-essay>

1 Russia and the Weimar Republic: Does a "Weimar Parallel" Exist?

1. J. J. Mearsheimer (1995) "Back to the Future—Instability in Europe after the Cold War," in M. Brown, S. M. Lynn-Jones, and S. E. Miller (eds), *The Perils of Anarchy—Contemporary Realism and International Security* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press), pp. 83–4.
2. S. P. Huntington (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 196.
3. J. Snyder (1992) "Averting Anarchy in the New Europe," revised edition published in S. M. Lynn-Jones (ed.), *The Cold War and After—Prospects for Peace* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press), pp. 104–40.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
6. E. D. Mansfield and J. Snyder (2005) *Electing to Fight—Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press).
7. *Ibid.* p. 15.
8. R. Nixon (1992) *Seize the Moment—America's Challenge in a One-Superpower World* (New York and London: Simon & Schuster), p. 72.
9. A. Melville (April 13, 1994) *Weimar and Russia: Is there an Analogy?* Lecture at the "Weimar and Russia Forum," UC Berkeley. (My italics, MHVH.) Available at <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/pubs/melville.html>
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. S. Sestanovich (January–February 1994) "Russia Turns the Corner," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 1, pp. 83–98.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
15. D. Remnick (January–February 1997) "Can Russia Change?," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 1, p. 47. (My emphasis, MHVH.)
16. *Ibid.*
17. A. Umland (1998) *The Fascist Threat in Post-Soviet Russia—An Investigation into the LDPR-Ideology 1990–1993, and Some Tentative Suggestions on the Appropriateness of the "Weimar Russia" Metaphor* (Brussels: NATO), p. 94. This report of 139 pages is available at <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/96-98/umland.pdf>
18. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
19. N. Ferguson (January 1, 2005) "Look back at Weimar—and Start to Worry about Russia," *The Telegraph*.
20. *Ibid.*
21. N. Ferguson (May 28, 2007), "Reviving the Evil Empire," *Los Angeles Times*.
22. *Ibid.*

23. Ibid.
24. O. Matthews and A. Nemtsova (August 15, 2011) "Fascist Russia?," *Newsweek*.
25. Ibid.
26. Cf. P. Goble (April 9, 2009) "'Weimar'-Like Threat Justifies Moscow's Authoritarianism, Russia's Chief Justice Says," *Window on Eurasia*. Available at <http://www.windowoneurasia.blogspot.com/2009/04/window-on-eurasia-weimar-like-threat.html>
27. Matthews and Nemtsova, "Fascist Russia?," o.c.
28. Y. Gaidar (2007) *Collapse of an Empire—Lessons for Modern Russia* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press), p. xv.
29. Umland, *The Fascist Threat in Post-Soviet Russia*, o.c.
30. V. Likhachov (2002) *Natsizm v Rossii* [Nazism in Russia] (Moscow: Tsentr 'Panorama'), p. 6. (My emphasis, MHVH.)
31. W. Laqueur (1993) *Black Hundred—The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia* (New York: HarperCollins), p. xi.
32. Ibid.
33. They included great parts of West Prussia, a part of Silesia and all of Posen (Poznan), which went to the newly-created state of Poland. The Memel region went to Lithuania and the tiny Hultschiner Ländchen (Hlučinsko) went to Czechoslovakia. In the west, Germany lost Alsace and the parts of Lorraine that it had taken from France after the Franco-Prussian war in 1871; the region around Eupen and Malmédy went to Belgium; and northern Schleswig went to Denmark. Some of these territories were not transferred immediately, but only after plebiscites were held such as, for instance, in Eupen-Malmédy, northern Schleswig, and Upper Silesia. Cf. Wolfgang Elz, "Foreign Policy," in A. McElligot (2009) *Weimar Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 50–1.
34. Elz, o.c., p. 53. Prussia was the greatest loser. According to Horst Möller, "On the basis of the Treaty of Versailles, Prussia lost 56,057,340 square kilometers with a population of 4,601,568 to the neighboring countries Poland, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, and Belgium; the *Reich* lost in 1918/19 altogether ca. 70,000 square kilometers with 7.3 million inhabitants (...) Prussia was therefore, not only in absolute numbers, but also relatively the only German state that suffered most of the territorial and population losses." Cf. H. Möller, "Preußen von 1918 bis 1947: Weimarer Republik, Preußen und der Nationalsozialismus," in W. Neugebauer (ed.) (2000) *Handbuch der preussischen Geschichte: Band III. Von Kaiserreich zum 20. Jahrhundert und Große Themen der Geschichte Preußens* (Berlin: De Gruyter), p. 224.
35. But it still remained by far the largest country in the world, followed by Canada (9,984,670 square kilometers) in second place, and the US (9,826,630 square kilometers) coming third (the area includes both land and water).
36. We should, indeed, compare the territorial losses of the Soviet Union with those of the British empire to get a more 'honest' picture. The British empire, which was at its apogee in the 1930s, ruled over a quarter of the earth's surface. After decolonization, Britain was mainly left with its European homeland of approximately one quarter of a million square kilometers. Britain lost almost 37 million square kilometers. Its area, therefore, was reduced to less than one percent of its former colonial empire.

37. One could also argue that other countries are discontinuous, as, for instance, the United States where the state of Alaska is separated by Canada from the rest of the US mainland. However, this case is different, because the territorial separation was not the result of a territorial *loss* (of the land in between), but of a territorial *gain*, as the US purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867.
38. In November 1991, President Yeltsin issued a decree granting the Kaliningrad region the status of a free economic zone. It could initiate its own foreign economic relations and became a tax-free haven. According to Alexander Sergounin, "Under the liberal scenario that was dominant at the time, the area could become a West-East trade bridge, Russia's Hong Kong." When, however, the region asked the federal authorities for more privileges, this led to distrust. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Sergey Shakhrai even feared "the creeping expansion of foreign influence in the economic and ethnic spheres, with the prospect of the creation of a 'fourth independent Baltic state.'" Cf. A. Sergounin (2003) *The Future of Kaliningrad: A Pilot Project or Exclave?* Available at <http://www.policy.hu/sergounin/paper.html>
39. P. Béhar (1992) *Une géopolitique pour l'Europe—Vers une nouvelle Eurasie?* (Paris: Éditions Desjonquères), p. 104.
40. Cf. R. Krickus (November 12, 2002) "Assessing the Kaliningrad Question," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
41. D. Trenin (2011) *Post-Imperium—A Eurasian Story* (Washington, DC and Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), p. 46.
42. Cf. D. J. K. Peukert (1992) *The Weimar Republic—The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang), p. 201.
43. Cf. V. R. Berghahn (2005) *Imperial Germany 1871—1914: Economy, Society, Culture and Politics* (New York: Berghahn Books), p. 38.
44. Source List and Detailed Death Tolls for the Twentieth Century Hemoclysm, available at <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstat1.htm>
45. "Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Union," available at <http://folk.uio.no/palk/PRIO%20Diaspora.htm>
46. "Interview given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channels Channel One, Russia, NTV," Sochi, August 31, 2008, President of Russia Official Web Portal. Available at <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/speeches/2008/08/31/>
47. My italics, MHVH. The second and third principles are, respectively, "the world should be multi-polar," and "Russia does not want confrontation with any other country."
48. As concerns South Ossetia, immediately after the war there were rumors that its "government" had asked to become an oblast (province) of the Russian Federation. However, this demand was quickly silenced because it did not fit into the (short-term) plans of the Kremlin. As concerns Medvedev's understanding of international law (his first principle), it is interesting to note his vision of international law when he speaks about the unilateral recognition by Russia of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. "According to international law," Medvedev said, "a new state becomes a subject of law, as the lawyers say, from the moment it gains recognition from at least one other country. From a legal point of view these new states have come into existence now." (Interview Medvedev, August 31, 2008, o.c.). Russian recognition of the "independence" of the "countries" it has itself created by its land grabs is considered enough to create "international law."

49. "Russia's power lies not just in energy" (August 21, 2008) Interview with MEP Professor Vytautas Landsbergis, President of Lithuania (1990–1992) and Speaker of Parliament (1996–2000), *EU-Russia Centre*, August 21, 2008. Available at <http://www.eu-russiacentre.org/eu-russiacentre-news/russias-power-lies-not-just-in-energy.html>

2 The "Weimar Parallel": Economic, Political, and Societal Aspects

1. Cf. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic—The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, o.c., p. 63.
2. Harold James described the printing folly of the German central bank as follows: "The last months of the German inflation provided a dramatic picture of a central bank believing that it needed to respond to the real fall in the value of currency by producing more currency at faster rates. The central bank or Reichsbank boasted of the efficiency of its 30 paper factories and 29 plate factories producing 400,000 printing plates to be employed by the 7,500 workers in the Reichsbank's own printing works, as well as by 132 other printing firms temporarily working to satisfy the need for currency." H. James, "The Weimar Economy," in A. McElligot (ed.) (2009) *Weimar Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), p. 108.
3. A. Rosenberg (1973) *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt), pp. 128–129.
4. James, "The Weimar Economy," o.c., p. 106. James indicated that "even in 1929, the German share of British and US imports was only three-fifths of the 1913 level, while German sales to neutral countries like Sweden and Switzerland had expanded" (pp. 106–107)."
5. Rosenberg, o.c., p. 129.
6. Peukert, o.c., pp. 120–121.
7. The question of financial support for the agricultural regions, especially the *Ostpreußenhilfe*, the support for East Prussia which was cut off from the rest of Germany by the Polish corridor, would become one of the spearheads of the nationalist conservative agitation, led by media tycoon Alfred Hugenberg, chairman of the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (DNVP), supported by President Hindenburg, against Weimar's young democracy. Weimar's parliamentary procedures were considered to block adequate help for this region threatened by imminent "polonization." Cf. Hans-Erich Volkmann, "Deutsche Agrar-eliten auf Revisions—und Expansionskurs," in M. Broszat and K. Schwabe (eds) (1989) *Die deutschen Eliten und der Weg in den Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck), pp. 334–388).
8. Cf. S. Menshikov (October 27, 2006) *Analysis of Russian Performance since 1990 and Future Outlook*, Paper presented to the workshop on "World Economic Performance: Past, Present, Future," University of Groningen.
9. Cf. C. G. Gaddy and B. W. Ickes (September–October 1998) "Russia's Virtual Economy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 5, p. 66.
10. In 1989 yield in the Russian Federation was 16.1 centner per hectare; in Western Europe and the US it was respectively 45.8 and 44.8 centner per hectare. Cf. Gaidar, *Collapse of an Empire*, o.c., p. 120.

11. Ibid., p. 124.
12. This point of resemblance between Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia has also been highlighted by Andreas Umland. Cf. Umland, *The Fascist Threat in Post-Soviet Russia*, o.c., p. 88.
13. M. Weber, "Politik als Beruf," in M. Weber (2002) *Schriften 1894–1922*, Dirk Kaesler (ed.) (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag), pp. 512–556.
14. M. Weber, "Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland. Zur politischen Kritik des Beamtentums und Parteiwesens," in Weber, *Schriften 1894–1922*, o.c., p. 413.
15. Ibid., p. 414.
16. Ibid., p. 426 (emphasis in the original text).
17. Ibid., p. 423.
18. Ibid., p. 427. Weber saw this danger coming primarily from the left, which was understandable so shortly after the Bolshevik revolution, but at the same time he warned that "those in favor of the old order (...) will use (...) every outburst of syndicalist putschism (...) to put pressure on the still weak nerves of the petty bourgeoisie" (p. 429).
19. The Communist KPD got 2.08% at the parliamentary elections of June 6, 1920; 12.6% on May 4, 1924; 9% on December 7, 1924; 10.6% on May 20, 1928; 13.1% on September 14, 1930; 14.3% on July 31, 1932; 16.86% on November 6, 1932, and 12.3% on March 5, 1933. Cf. H-J. Winkler (1963) *Die Weimarer Demokratie—Eine politische Analyse der Verfassung und der Wirklichkeit* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag), pp. 88–91.
20. On May 4, 1924 the DNVP got 19.5% and the NSDAP 6.5%. On March 5, 1933, the DNVP got 8% and the NSDAP 43.9%. Cf. Winkler, o.c., *ibid.*).
21. The biggest loser of the three was the German Democratic Party (DDP), which still got 18.55% of the vote in January 1919, but only got 1% in the last elections of March 5, 1933.
22. Cf. L. Luks, "Die faschistische Herausforderung—eine Gefahr für das erneuerte Rußland?" in L. Luks (2007) *Zwei Gesichter des Totalitarismus—Bolschewismus und Nationalsozialismus im Vergleich* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag), p. 272.
23. S. D. Shenfield (2001) *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc.), p. 51.
24. Ibid.
25. In 1993, 1995, 1999, 2003 and 2007 the CPRF won respectively 12.40%, 22.30%, 24.29%, 12.61% and 11.57%. The LDPR won respectively 22.92%, 11.18%, 5.98%, 11.45%, and 8.14%.
26. O. Kirchheimer, "Deutschland oder der Verfall der Opposition," in O. Kirchheimer (1967) *Politische Herrschaft—Fünf Beiträge zur Lehre vom Staat* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), pp. 60–61.
27. According to J. Michael Waller, "St. Petersburg Mayor Anatoliy Sobchak stated that, when he was a member of Gorbachev's Presidential Council, he witnessed the order to 'find' a controlled individual who would set up the first 'opposition' party. Zhirinovskiy, reported Sobchak, was that individual, whose Liberal Democratic Party registered even before the CPSU." J. M. Waller (April–May 1994) "The KGB and Its 'Successors,'" *Perspective*, Vol. IV, No. 4, note 20. Available at <http://128.197.26.3/iscip/vol4/Waller.html>

28. Yeltsin would create five new organizations: the FSB for internal security, the SVR for intelligence gathering (espionage) abroad, the GUA (for guarding government buildings), the Federal Border Service, and the FAPSI, a department for information, communication and cryptography.
29. Waller, "The KGB & Its Successors," o.c.
30. E. Nolte (2008) *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche* (Munich and Zurich: Piper Verlag), p. 419.
31. Cf. A. Ostrovsky (September 28, 2008) "Flirting with Stalin," *Prospect*, Issue 150.
32. The "struggle for the national anthem" was even still going on in 2010. It took a new turn when the communist deputy, Boris Kashin, proposed to changing the line in the text of the new anthem which reads: "By God saved as ever our dear native land." According to him this line was not acceptable for atheists. He proposed that the word "God" be changed to the pronoun "us." His proposal was not accepted. "God Beats Communists in Russian National Anthem" (March 31, 2010) *Pravda*. Available at http://english.pravda.ru/russia/kremlin/31-03-2010/112797-russia_anthem-0
33. "Moscow Metro Refurbished with Praise for Stalin," http://www.rferl.org/content/Moscow_Metro_Refurbished_With_Praise_For_Stalin/1809381.html
34. "Activists Denounce Stalin in Station" (August 28, 2009) *The Moscow Times*.
35. S. Haffner (2001) *Geschichte eines Deutschen—Die Erinnerungen 1914–1933* (Stuttgart and Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt), p. 84.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
37. M. Olson (2000) *Power and Prosperity—Outgrowing Communist and Capitalist Dictatorships* (New York: Basic Books), p. xxvii.
38. Cf. B. Reitschuster (2004) *Wladimir Putin—Wohin steuert Russland?* (Berlin: Rowohlt), pp. 280–284. According to Reitschuster, Putin was a member of the supervisory board of "SPAG," a Petersburg real estate firm until 2000. The German office of this firm was searched in 2003 by the German police, because it was suspected of having laundered money for the *Tambovskaya*, a Saint-Petersburg based mafia group. Putin was a friend of "SPAG" founder Vladimir Smirnov, who was said to have a close relationship with Vladimir Barsukov, the godfather of the *Tambovskaya*. Putin offered Smirnov a post in the Kremlin, where he became head of the real estate department.
39. P. Juviler, "Political Community and Human Rights in Postcommunist Russia," in A. Pollis and P. Schwab (eds) (2000) *Human Rights—New Perspectives, New Realities* (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.), p. 119.
40. Reitschuster, o.c., p. 279.
41. David Satter, for instance, described the way in which "apartment gangs" took over many of the newly privatized apartments: "in the years 1992–1997 in Moscow alone, 20,000 people sold their housing and then disappeared. In the country as a whole, the number for the period was many times higher. A significant percentage, if not the vast majority, of these people were believed to have been murdered for their apartments. Once housing was privatized in Russia, it became valuable, and apartment gangs formed in cities all over the country. They bribed building superintendents to give them the names of alcoholics or elderly persons living alone without close relatives. They then, under various guises, made contact with these persons, forced them to

- sign over their apartments, and then killed them." D. Satter (2003) *Darkness at Dawn—The Rise of the Russian Criminal State* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 224. How widespread this practice had become became clear in June 2011, when a former policeman, Vladimir Basmanov, had been sentenced to life in prison for seven murders in Russia's far eastern Primorye region. Basmanov, together with another former policeman and three accomplices, "identified homeowners who were considered alcoholics and posed as police officers in order to take their passports and the ownership deeds to their homes. The homeowners were then abducted and killed." "Former Russian Policeman Jailed For Life For Serial Killings" (June 14, 2011) *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*.
42. G. L. Mosse (1991) *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), p. 160.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
 44. S. Kracauer, "Murder Trials and Society" (first published as "Mordprozeß und Gesellschaft" (March 1931) in *Die neue Rundschau* 42, pp. 431–432). In A. Kaes, M. Jay, and E. Dimendberg (eds) (1994) *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley, LA and London: University of California Press), p. 740.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 741.
 46. E. J. Gumbel, "Four Years of Political Murder" (first published in *Vier Jahre politischer Mord* (1922) (Berlin: Verlag der neuen Gesellschaft), pp. 145–149). In Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg (eds) *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, o.c., p. 101.
 47. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
 48. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
 49. *Ibid.* (My emphasis, MHVH.)
 50. S. LeVine (2009) *Putin's Labyrinth—Spies, Murder, and the Dark Heart of the New Russia* (New York: Random House), Introduction, p. xx.
 51. Gumbel, o.c., p. 103.
 52. N. Wachsmann (2004) *Hitler's Prisons—Legal Terror in Nazi Germany* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 18.
 53. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
 54. *Ibid.*
 55. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
 56. Juviler, o.c., p. 119.
 57. A. Politkovskaya, "Planet Earth: The World Beyond Russia," in A. Politkovskaya (2010) *Nothing but the Truth—Selected Dispatches* (London: Harvill Secker), pp. 297–298.
 58. E. D. Weitz (2007) *Weimar Germany—Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press), p. 131.
 59. Umland, "The Fascist Threat in Post-Soviet Russia," o.c., pp. 97–98.
 60. This cause and effect relationship between a baby boom and a rise in criminality could also be observed after the Second World War. According to David Garland, the post-war baby boom in the US and the UK is one of the factors that led 20 years later to a steep rise in criminality in these countries. "Another ingredient for the 1960s rise in crime," he wrote, "was the arrival of a large cohort of teenage males—the age group most prone to criminal behavior," D. Garland (2001) *The Culture of Control—Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), p. 91.

61. N. Eberstadt (Spring 2009) "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb," *World Affairs*.
62. "Corruption Perceptions Index 2009," *Transparency International*. Available at http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009/cpi_2009_table. In 2008 Russia ranked 147—which means that the "National Anti-Corruption Plan," presented on June 25, 2008 by President Medvedev's newly created "Council for Combating Corruption," did not show much impact.
63. "Bribe Payers Index 2008," *Transparency International*. Available at http://www.transparency.org/news_room/latest_news/press_releases/2008/bpi_2008_en
64. C. Andrew and V. Mitrokhin (2000) *The Mitrokhin Archive—The KGB in Europe and the West* (London and New York: Penguin Books), p. 719.
65. "The Tents of the Righteous—The OECD and Corruption" (September 17, 2011) *The Economist*. The bribery convention requires members to change their legal system and open law-enforcement systems to intense external scrutiny. OECD officials insist that "there will be absolutely no bending of the rules to appease Kremlin sensitivities" (ibid.).
66. "Prichiny korruptsii i kak s nimi borotsya?" (Causes of Corruption and How to Fight Them?) (September 17, 2008) VTsIOM, All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center, Press Release No. 1048.
67. "Sotsialnye resursy preodoleniya korruptsii" (Social Resources for Overcoming Corruption) (September 22, 2008) Public Opinion Foundation FOM.
68. A. Panarin (2005) *Revansh Istorii—Rossiyskaya strategicheskaya iniciativa v XXI veke* (The Revenge of History—The Russian Strategic Initiative in the Twenty-First Century) (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Russkiy Mir), p. 206.
69. In an article in *Time* magazine is detailed "the payments a prospective regional governor has to make to political bagmen in Moscow in order to get the Kremlin's nod for the post. For wealthier regions, such an endorsement can cost as much as \$20 million, money that the politicians raise quietly from corporate "sponsors" that expect special treatment in return. The amount of money flowing to kingmakers in the Kremlin, in other words, is staggering." A. Ignatius (December 19, 2007) "A Tsar Is Born," *Time Magazine*.
70. "In an interview with *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, Major-General Alexander Sorochkin, deputy chair of the Prosecutor's Office Investigations Committee, admitted that corruption in the Russian Armed Forces resulted in losses of 2.2 billion rubles (USD 78.6 million) to the state budget in the first nine months of 2008, and that the number of corruption-related crimes in the Russian Armed Forces increased by at least 30 percent compared to the same period in 2007, to a total of 1,400." Quoted by T. Tagarev (Summer 2010) "Enabling Factors and Effects of Corruption in the Defense Sector," *Connections*, Vol. IX, No. 3, p. 78.
71. J. Bush (April 2010) "Pour les entreprises occidentales, le marché russe reste aventureux," *Le Monde*. In the same article, it is mentioned that the German car maker Daimler paid 185 million dollars to the US Department of Justice to stop an investigation into the breaking of US anticorruption laws in Russia. This is in itself an interesting development which could hinder corruption from spreading. "The novelty," wrote the paper, "is that from now

- on foreign companies established in Russia must reckon with the vigilance of the authorities of their own country."
72. R. D. Putnam (2000) *Bowling Alone—The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster), p. 19.
 73. Cf. Gottfried Dietze, according to whom "Before the First World War [in Germany] (...) the liberal defined *Rechtsstaat* always remained intact, despite its formalization and despite the fact that it was increasingly menaced by national and social elements." G. Dietze, "Staatsrecht und Rechtsstaat," in K. von Beyme (1971) *Theory and Politics—Theorie und Politik—Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag für Carl Joachim Friedrich* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff), p. 552.
 74. Satter, *Darkness at Dawn*, o.c., p. 113.
 75. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
 76. F. Fukuyama (1999) *The Great Disruption—Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order* (New York: Touchstone), pp. 30–31. (My emphasis, MHVH.)
 77. D. Bahry, M. Kosolapov, P. Kozyreva, and R. K. Wilson (November 2005) "Ethnicity and Trust: Evidence from Russia," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 99, No. 4, p. 525.
 78. A. Politkovskaya (2007) *A Russian Diary*, with a foreword by Jon Snow (London: Harvill Secker), p. 256.
 79. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
 80. *Ibid.*, p. 281.
 81. And prisons are not only there to intimidate the population, but they are also there to kill people—intentionally or by negligence. In 2009, 4150 inmates died in Russian prisons. This is more than 11 per day. One of them was lawyer Sergey Magnitsky who was imprisoned after having denounced members of the police for participating in a 160 million euro tax evasion. He died on November 16, 2009, in prison after having been refused a necessary operation. Cf. M. Jégo (June 11, 2010) "Dans l'enfer des prisons russes," *Le Monde*.
 82. A. de Tocqueville (1981) *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Tome II (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion), p. 131.
 83. Cf. N. V. Riasanovsky (2005) *Russian Identities: A Historical Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 41–44.
 84. A. B. Seligman (1997) *The Problem of Trust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p. 21.
 85. *Ibid.*
 86. R. D. Putnam (1993) *Making Democracy Work—Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p. 177.
 87. Bahry et al., "Ethnicity and Trust: Evidence from Russia," o.c., p. 530.
 88. A. O. Hirschman (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty—Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press), p. 33.
 89. L. Gudkov (July 11, 2011) "Pustaya strana—pochemu segodnya emigriruyut iz Rossii" (Empty Land—Why They Emigrate Today from Russia), *Novaya Gazeta*, p. 2. Available (in Russian) at <http://novayagazeta.ru/data/2011/074/22.html?print>. For the adult population as a whole the percentage was 22. This was the highest percentage since the demise of the Soviet Union—even higher than the peak of 21 percent in the crisis year 1999.
 90. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

91. Quoted in: "Time to Shove Off" (September 10, 2011), *The Economist*.
92. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, o.c., p. 43.
93. This is confirmed by Hirschman, who wrote: "those (...) who care *most* about the quality of the product and who, therefore, are those who would be the most active, reliable, and creative agents of voice are for that very reason also those who are apparently likely to exit first in case of deterioration" (*ibid.*, p. 47).
94. Gudkov, "Pustaya strana—pochemu segodnya emigriruyut iz Rossii," o.c., p. 8.

3 The "Weimar Parallel": Socio-Psychological Aspects

1. Cf. Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg (eds) *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, o.c., p. 5.
2. In January 1991, for instance, there were still 337,000 Russian troops stationed in the German Democratic Republic. These were gradually withdrawn until August 1994.
3. It is still an open question, however, how far Yeltsin's action was decisive for the disintegration of the Soviet Union. According to Gail W. Lapidus, "There are many—including Gorbachev and some of his staff—who have argued that (...) 'the Union could have been preserved.' In essence, they blame Yeltsin for precipitating the collapse of the USSR in his ambition to replace Gorbachev rather than to share power with him. While Yeltsin's actions were indeed decisive in the final stages, this chapter contends that the whole sequence of contingent events cumulatively undermined that possibility. It is by no means clear (...) that the Union treaty in the form agreed upon in August was really workable, that it would have been ratified by a significant number of republic parliaments, or that it would have provided more than a breathing spell." Cf. G. W. Lapidus (Autumn 2003) "Nation and State-Building in Post-Soviet Russia," in *Kazan Federalist*, No. 4(8). Available at <http://www.kazanfed.ru/en/publications/kazanfederalist/n8/7/>
4. According to the German psycho-analyst Margarete Mitscherlich there exists a relationship between *personal* humiliation and *national* humiliation. She gave the example of a patient, Peter. "The feeling of having failed (...) could, when the occasion offered itself, without difficulty being transferred to national humiliations: because of this Peter, like his father, became an admirer of Hitler, from whom both expected revenge for the humiliations they had suffered." (M. Mitscherlich (1980) *Das Ende der Vorbilder—Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Idealisierung* (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag), p. 17).
5. A. J. P. Taylor (1977) *Europe: Grandeur and Decline* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), pp. 168–169.
6. Cf. H. Münkler (2009) *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen* (Berlin: Rowohlt), p. 97.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
8. First published in *Stenographischer Bericht über die öffentlichen Verhandlungen des 15. Untersuchungsausschusses der verfassungsgebenden Nationalversammlung*, Vol. 2, Berlin, 1920, pp. 700–701. In Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, o.c., p. 16.
9. Cf. J. Snyder (2000) *From Voting to Violence—Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company), p. 122.

10. Münkler, o.c., p. 98.
11. Hitler speaks about the "scum" (Lumpen), who "paid by the war propaganda of the enemy, took our weapons away, broke the moral backbone and sold out the paralyzed Reich for thirty pieces of silver" A. Hitler (1933) *Mein Kampf* (Munich: Verlag Franz Eher Nachfolger, G.m.b.H.), p. 719.
12. Yegor Gaidar was Prime Minister from June 15, 1992 to December 14, 1992. Andrey Kozyrev was Foreign Minister from October 1990 to January 1996.
13. Quoted in Anonymous author (2008) *Projet: Russie* (Paris: Éditions Temps & Périodes), p. 316.
14. A. Dugin (2005) *Konspirologiya*, Moscow. Available (in Russian) at <http://epop.ru/sub/trash/book/konspy.html>
15. Cf. W. Laqueur (1974) *Weimar—Die Kultur der Republik* (Frankfurt and Berlin: Ullstein), p. 108: "As the nationalists saw it, however, Germany was encircled by a world of enemies who were jealous of its progress and did not want to let it take its 'place in the sun.'"
16. C. Schmitt (2002) *Der Begriff des Politischen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot), p. 29.
17. Ibid., p. 26.
18. Cf. N. Bobbio, "Ragioni di stato e democrazia," in N. Bobbio (2006), *Elogio della mitezza—e altri scritti morali* (Milano: Il Saggiatore), pp. 89–104. Bobbio emphasized that even if one wants to maintain that politics is amoral, it is more appropriate to hold to Machiavelli's political *virtù* as its characteristic value. This is the prudence of a ruler, which is "the capacity to adapt the principles to the solutions of the concrete situation."
19. "President Putin addressed the Russian nation on television on Saturday. Excerpts from his remarks" (September 4, 2004) *BBC News*.
20. "The Treaty of Versailles: The Reparation Clauses," first published in *The Treaty of Peace Between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1919). Reproduced in Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg, *The Weimar Sourcebook*, o.c., p. 8.
21. "Ansprache des Reichsaussenministers Grafen Brockdorff-Rantzau bei Überreichung des Friedensvertrags-Entwurfs durch die Alliierten und Assoziierten Mächte" (1920), in Graf Brockdorff-Rantzau, *Dokumente* (Charlottenburg: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte), pp. 113ff. Reproduced in Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg, *The Weimar Sourcebook*, o.c., p. 10.
22. The French-Hungarian historian François Fejtő took a different view. He thought it "absurd to designate Germany (...) as the only imperialist power responsible for the war. All the powers that divided Europe between themselves and that were busy colonizing other continents were structurally imperialist." According to him, "the French plans foresaw the preventive invasion of Belgium, just as the German plans." But equally Fejtő has to admit—thereby weakening his own argument—that "the merit of the French was to have been so cautious to accept as an absolute rule not to violate the neutrality of Belgium than after the Germans would have done so." F. Fejtő (1994) *Requiem pour un empire défunt—Histoire de la destruction de l'Autriche-Hongrie* (Paris: Lieu Commun), p. 27.
23. E. Troeltsch, *The Dogma of Guilt*, first published as "Das Schulddogma" (June 19, 1919) in *Spektatorbriefe. Aufsätze über die deutsche Revolution und*

- die Weltpolitik 1918–1922*, H. Baron (ed.), Tübingen (J. C. B. Mohr), 1924, pp. 314–321. Reproduced in Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg, *The Weimar Sourcebook*, o.c., p. 14.
24. E. Lucas (2008) *The New Cold War—Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 105–106. A similar appreciation is given by Niall Ferguson, who in the introduction of his book *Empire* wrote: "I came to realize that (...) the costs of the British Empire had, in fact, substantially outweighed its benefits. The Empire had, after all, been one of history's Bad Things." N. Ferguson (2003) *Empire—How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane), p. xvii.
 25. R. J. Rummel (2004) *Death by Government* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers), p. 81.
 26. Ibid.
 27. Quoted in J.M. Waller (1994) *Secret Empire – The KGB in Russia Today*, (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press), p. 277.
 28. Victor Zaslavsky, for instance, pointed to the possible use of the "totalitarianism" argument as an "exculpatory tactic." Cf. V. Zaslavsky, "The Soviet Union," in K. Barkey and M. von Hagen (eds) (1997) *After Empire—Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires* (Boulder, CO and Oxford: Westview Press), 1997, p. 75. A third argument which, eventually, could have been used is to deny a historical continuity. This—artificial—argument was, for instance, used by subsequent French governments after the Second World War to deny any continuity between Pétain's Vichy government with pre-war and post-war French governments. President Jacques Chirac deserves recognition for having ended this artificial historical *quarantaine* which put a part of the nation's history between parentheses in order to avoid guilt attribution.
 29. K. Jaspers, "Die Schuldfrage," in K. Jaspers (1979) *Die Schuldfrage—Für Völkermord gibt es keine Verjährung* (Munich: R. Piper & Co Verlag), p. 51.
 30. Cf. H-U. Wehler (2010) *Land ohne Unterschichten—Neue Essays zur deutschen Geschichte* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck), p. 237.
 31. Jaspers, "Die Schuldfrage," o.c., p. 29.
 32. Ibid., p. 58. Elsewhere Jaspers formulated this as follows: "Indeed, there exists no collective guilt; guilt has always only the individual. However, the political responsibility for the consequences of democratic decisions is shared by all. (...) When all are politically responsible, this does not mean that the guilt is equal for all. Who in March 1933 voted for national socialists, German nationals (Deutschnationale) [or] communists, not only bears a responsibility, but also the moral-political guilt." K. Jaspers (1961) *Die Atombombe und die Zukunft des Menschen* (Munich: DTV), p. 312.
 33. Even Margarete Mitscherlich, who, together with her partner, Alexander Mitscherlich, published in 1967 *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (The inability to mourn), in which the authors criticized the German inability to mourn their Nazi past, arrived at a much more positive assessment in an interview 42 years later. On the question: "Do the Germans do enough to come to terms with their past?" she answered: "On the whole, yes. There is almost no country in which one has learned to speak with so much seriousness about one's own bad past. Maybe the Germans are even a bit glad at being able to

- confidently say *mea culpa*." "Ohne Angst werden wir fett" (May 26, 2009), *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.
34. We should, however, be careful not to present the post-Second World War *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in Germany as an easy and smooth process. Theodor Adorno wrote in 1959 that the expression "coming to terms with the past" in Germany had become a reason for suspicion, because in some circles "it does not mean that one seriously comes to terms with the past, [and] breaks its spell by a clear consciousness. But one wants to put an end to it for once and for all and if possible even remove it from memory. The gesture that everything should be forgotten and forgiven, that is reserved for the one who experienced the injustice, is practised by those who defend the perpetrators." T. Adorno, "Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?" (What Means: Coming to Terms with the Past?), in T. Adorno (1971) *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), p. 10.
 35. B. Schlink, "Recht—Schuld—Zukunft," in B. Schlink (2002) *Vergangenheitsschuld und gegenwärtiges Recht* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), p. 37.
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. This aspect of *choice* implies the possibility that later generations, unlike the generation(s) before them, *deny* this responsibility. This possibility is indicated by the German historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler, who with a certain concern observes a change in the debate in Germany in the last ten years in which not so much the German "perpetrator role" (*Täterrolle*) is emphasized, as the German "victim role" (*Opferrolle*). Although he concedes that this debate, in itself, is justified, he wants to bind it to certain conditions to avoid a "victimization cult." These conditions are: the use of sober and disciplined language, an emphasis on the *cause* of German suffering (Hitler's wars of aggression), and not indulging in the debate but to close it in due time in order to avoid the emergence of "a victimization cult" Cf. H-U. Wehler, "Vom Tätervolk zum Opferkult? Der Diskurs über die deutsche Zeitgeschichte und die Rhetorik der Viktimisierung," in H-U. Wehler (2010) *Land ohne Unterschichten? Neue Essays zur deutschen Geschichte* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck), pp. 18–24.
 39. J. Mace, "The Man-made Famine of 1933 in Soviet Ukraine," in R. Sebyn and B. Krawchenko (eds) (1986) *Famine in Ukraine in 1932–1933* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta), p. 11.
 40. On the website of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed on June 2, 2008, there was an official address of President Victor Yushchenko to "World's Ukrainians" at home and in the diaspora to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary and bring the "international community to recognition of Holodomor as (a) genocide against (the) Ukrainian nation."
 41. Cf. "Latviya viznala Holodomor genotsidom," March 13, 2008, *BBC Ukrainian*.
 42. T. Snyder (2010) *Bloodlands—Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (London: The Bodley Head), p. 53.
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. H. Rappaport (1999) *Joseph Stalin: A Biographical Companion* (Oxford: ABC Clio), p. 52.
 45. Cf. A. Applebaum (November 11, 2010) "The Worst of the Madness," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. LVII, No. 17, p. 12.

46. Cf. T. Kuzio (September 30, 2011) "Poor Ukrainian-Russian Ties Reflect Yanukovych-Putin Relationship," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 8, No. 180.
47. "Russia accuses Kiev of using Holodomor to divert attention" (October 28, 2008), *RIA Novosti*.
48. M. Ellman (June 2007) "Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932–33 Revisited," *Europe Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 4, p. 679. A similar position has been defended by Daniel Goldhagen. "Whenever governments have not alleviated famine conditions," he wrote, "political leaders decided *not to say no* to mass death—in other words, they said *yes*. Seen in this light, the politics of famines and starvation resemble the politics of mass murder and elimination." Cf. D. J. Goldhagen (2009) *Worse than War—Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity* (New York: Public Affairs), pp. 29–30. An author who opts for Stalin's clear *intention* to kill is David Landes, who wrote: "But in the Soviet Union, seizure of farm crops in the 1930s in the Ukraine led to a ghastly famine that killed millions. But then, this was the intent. These were nationalists and kulaks, marked as enemies of the Revolution" D. S. Landes (1998) *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (London: Abacus), p. 500. Also Patrick Wright speaks about the "Great Famine" created by Stalin's collectivization of agriculture as "a *deliberately provoked* disaster in which uncounted millions starved." P. Wright (2007) *Iron Curtain—From Stage to Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 293. (My emphasis, MHVH.)
49. Snyder, *Bloodlands*, o.c., p. 34.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
51. N. Nazarbayev (1998) *My Life, My Times and the Future*, Translated and edited by P. Conradi (Yelvertoft Manor: Pilkington Press), p. 130. Timothy Snyder gives a more cautious estimate of the number of famine victims in Kazakhstan: 1.3 million people (non-Kazakhs included). Cf. Snyder, *Bloodlands*, o.c., p. 53.
52. "Official position of the Russian Foreign Ministry concerning the occupation of the Baltic countries by the Soviet Union (4 May 2005)." Published in "Border Treaty Between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Latvia" (June 8, 2006) European Commission, DG External Policies Delegations Europe, Brussels.
53. How much Stalin was preoccupied with the expansion of the Soviet empire and even in the midst of a national catastrophe stubbornly tried to obtain international recognition for his most recent land acquisitions, has been described by Churchill in his book *The Second etc. World War*. When after the German invasion of the Soviet Union British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden visited Moscow in December 1941 in order to negotiate a Treaty of Alliance between the Soviet Union, the US and Britain, Stalin put as a condition, "explicit recognition of their occupation of the Baltic states and of their new frontier with Finland" (p. 292). Five months later, when Molotov visited London on May 20, 1942, the Russians "maintained their original position and even brought up specifically the question of agreeing to the Russian occupation of Eastern Poland." The Russian territorial greed did not stop here, because "Molotov also put forward a case for the recognition in a secret agreement of Russia's claims on Roumania" (p. 296). When his demands were refused by Stalin's two Western allies, this did not prevent him from signing the Treaty

- of Alliance. Cf. W. S. Churchill (2005) *The Second World War, Volume IV—The Hinge of Fate* (London and New York: Penguin).
54. "Latvia Puts Damage from 'Soviet Occupation' at \$200 bln" (April 28, 2009), *RIA Novosti*.
 55. Y. Baranchik (May 13, 2009) "How Much the Balts Owe Russia?" *Intellibriefs*.
 56. H. Arendt, "Truth and Politics," in H. Arendt (2006) *Between Past and Future—Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, with an introduction by J. Kohn (New York: Penguin Books), p. 234.
 57. *Ibid.*, pp. 234–35.
 58. *Predlozheniya ob uchrezhdenii obshchenatsionalnoy gosudarstvenno-obshchestvennoy programmy "Ob uvekovечenii pamyati zhertv totalitarnogo rezhima i o natsionalnom primireнии*. The text (in Russian) is available at <http://www.rg.ru/printable/2011/04/08/repress.html>
 59. S. Karaganov (April 8, 2011) "Roman s tiranom bez kontsa? Natsionalnoe primirenie nevozmozhno bez suda i pamyati," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*.
 60. F. Lukyanov (January 20, 2010) "The Well of Soviet Nostalgia is Running Dry," *The Moscow Times*.
 61. C. Tilly (2008) *Credit and Blame* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press), p. 6.
 62. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
 63. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
 64. "Komissiya po Protivodeistviyu popytкам falsifikatsii istorii v ucherb interesam Rossii," Website of the Russian President. Available at <http://www.kremlin.ru/articles/216485.shtml>. Cf. also "Russia sets up commission to prevent falsification of history" (May 19, 2009), *RIA Novosti*.
 65. *RIA Novosti*, May 19, 2009, o.c.
 66. "Russian MPs see any falsification of WWII results as inadmissible" (May 27, 2005), *RIA Novosti*.
 67. V. Ryzhkov (May 28, 2009) "A Backward Tradition of Manipulating History," *The Moscow Times*.
 68. C. Castoriadis, "Communisme, fascisme, émancipation," in C. Castoriadis (2005) *Une société à la dérive—Entretiens et débats 1974—1997* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil), p. 234.
 69. In fact the formation of the commission coincided with a debate in the Russian State Duma, proposing a law to criminalize the questioning of the Soviet Union's role in the Second World War. This law would be based on universal jurisdiction, which would make it possible to persecute foreigners.
 70. S. Kovalyov, *Vymysly i Falsifikatsii v Otsenkakh Roli SSSR Nakakune i s Nachalom Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny*.
 71. "Poles Angry over Article on WWII" (June 5, 2009), *The Moscow Times*.
 72. Afterwards, the article could still be found on the website of the nationalist Orthodox organization *Yedinoye Otechestvo* (United Fatherland), where it had been posted on October 25, 2008. Available at <http://www.otchestvo.org.ua/main/200810/2520.htm>
 73. Cf. P. Goble (June 5, 2009) "Moscow Distances Itself from Article Blaming Poland for Starting WWII," *The Moscow Times*.
 74. I. Sukhov (June 4, 2009) "Radi Istoricheskoy Pravdy" (In the Name of the Historical Truth), *Vremya Novostey*.

75. J. Lukacs (2002) *At the End of an Age* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 77. (My emphasis, MHVH.)
76. D. Stone (May 23, 2009) "Against Falsification," *The Russian Front*. Cf. also B. Whitmore (May 29, 2009) "Russian History in the Dock," RadioFreeEurope-RadioLiberty. Available at <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1742650.html>
77. The common Franco-German history book, prepared and written by a mixed Franco-German authorial team, was introduced in 2006 in France and in the autumn of 2007 in Germany. According to the French daily *Le Monde*, "the press is enthusiastic, the echo global. In Japan, in Korea, and especially in the United States, some want to take it as an example." F. Lemaître (May 24, 2011) "Malheureux manuel franco-allemand ...," *Le Monde*. How difficult it is to put into effect even such a commendable initiative, became clear in 2011. Of the first two volumes (of three) only 40,000 were sold in each country instead of the expected 100,000. This led the French publisher to print only 7000 copies of the third volume. The problems were due to a combination of factors, such as educational reforms in France, giving a less prominent place to history in the curriculum of the *lycée*, as well as to different pedagogical approaches in the two countries. The German coordinator of the project, Peter Geiss, however, remained convinced that "it is the beginning of a process. A laboratory that permits a real exchange on history education and that contributes to the construction of Europe" (ibid.).
78. Cf. Barbara Cölln (February 14, 2008) "Deutschland und Polen arbeiten an gemeinsamem Geschichtsbuch" (Germany and Poland work towards a common history book), *Deutsche Welle DW-World*.
79. I. Berlin "Historical inevitability," in I. Berlin (1979) *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), p. 114.
80. According to Olga Kryshchanovskaya and Stephen White, who compared the number of siloviki in the senior ranks of the governments of Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin, the share in the national leadership rose from 4.8 percent under Gorbachev to 58.3 percent under Putin. Because the last figure relates to the year 2003, this percentage is probably still higher today. Cf. O. Kryshchanovskaya and S. White (2003) "Putin's Militocracy," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, p. 294.
81. This is a fortiori true for Putin himself, who worked for the First Chief Directorate of the KGB, its foreign service, which was re-baptized into SVR in 1992. According to Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, "the SVR copes with the unfortunate fact that some of its past heroes perpetrated or collaborated in the atrocities of the Great Terror by denying, absurdly, that they played any part in them. In the SVR version of the Terror, the sole involvement of foreign intelligence was to produce martyrs who 'perished in the torture chambers of Yezhov and Beria.'" C. Andrew and V. Mitrokhin (1999) *The Mitrokhin Archive—The KGB in Europe and the West* (London: Penguin), p. 735.

4 Post-Imperial Pain and the Making of a New National Myth: The "Weimar Parallel": Socio-Psychological Aspects (Continued)

1. D. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations—Why Some are So Rich and Some So Poor*, o.c., p. 451.

2. This is especially true in the case of Weimar Germany where there was a quick succession of imperial *inflation* and *deflation*. The peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk of March 3, 1918 with the new communist government of the Soviet Union, brought large parts of the former Russian empire under German domination. The territorial gains, which included Finland, the Baltic states, Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, were lost again eight months later, together with large parts of the German homeland.
3. Gustav Stresemann, a liberal politician, was German Chancellor from August 13, until November 23, 1923. From August 13, 1923, until his sudden death on October 3, 1929, he was Foreign Minister.
4. These phases were distinguished by the psychologist E. Kübler-Ross (1993) in her book *On Death and Dying* (New York: Scribner), Chapters IV/VII. Kübler-Ross developed her theory of coping with loss (of life) for the situation of terminal patients. However, these phases can equally be distinguished in the populations of former empires that are coping with a post-imperial syndrome—although in a less extreme way.
5. David Landes concluded—rightly: “To the disappointment of the anticolonialist doctrinaires, the ex-imperial nations suffered not a whit by the loss of these territories; on the contrary” (Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, o.c., p. 439).
6. At the Fifth Europe-Russia Forum in May 2009 in Bucharest, one of the speakers, Vitaly Portnikov, a Ukrainian journalist, said that in Russia feelings of frustration with the loss of empire were not present at the beginning of the 1990s, but only emerged after the economic revival of Russia in the first decade of the twenty-first century. This confirms an observation made by Yegor Gaidar (*Collapse of an Empire*, o.c., p. xvi). If this is true, this can mean two things. First, that, according to the theory of Kübler-Ross (see note 4), in the 1990s the Russian population was still in the phases of shock and denial. Second, that neo-imperialist tendencies and objectives will be strengthened in a period of economic growth.
7. C. Lasch (1991) *The True and Only Heaven—Progress and Its Critics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company), p. 106.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
10. H. Plessner (1969) *Die verspätete Nation—Über die politische Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Kohlhammer Verlag), p. 39.
11. H. Plessner, “Die Legende von den zwanziger Jahren,” in H. Plessner (1974) *Diesseits der Utopie—Ausgewählte Beiträge zur Kulturosoziologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), p. 89.
12. This does not mean that behind these lofty ideals no national interests were hidden. E. H. Carr observed that “the English-speaking peoples are past masters in the art of concealing their selfish national interests in the guise of the general good, and that this kind of hypocrisy is a special and characteristic peculiarity of the Anglo-Saxon mind” (E. H. Carr (2001) *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919—1939* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 74). However, this does not mean that these lofty ideals can totally be reduced to down-to-earth national interests, as Carr seemed to suggest.
13. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic—The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, o.c., p. 242.

14. E. Jünger, "Fire," first published as "Feuer" (1922) in *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (Berlin: Verlag Mittler), pp. 72–76. In Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, o.c., p. 20.
15. Ibid.
16. O. Spengler (1973) *Der Untergang des Abendlandes—Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Munich: Beck Verlag), p. x.
17. W. Laqueur (1977) *Weimar—Die Kultur der Republik* (Frankfurt am Main and Berlin: Ullstein), p. 119.
18. Cf. T. Mann "The German Republic." First published as "Von deutscher Republik: Aus einem Vortrag" (October 17, 1922) *Berliner Tageblatt*, No. 469. In Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, o.c., pp. 108–9. Mann wrote: "But when I found out that this man wanted his prophecies of death and petrification taken in sober earnest; that he was instructing the young not to waste their emotions and passions on culture, art, poetry, and such things but to hold fast to what must inevitably be the future, which they must will in order to will anything at all, to technique and mechanics, administration, perhaps politics; when I perceived that the hand this man reached out towards the yearnings and wishes of the human being was actually just the old, natural Satanic claw, then I averted my own face from so much inhuman hate and put the book out of my sight, lest I find myself admiring so harmful and deadly a work."
19. Weitz, *Weimar Germany—Promise and Tragedy*, o.c., p. 335.
20. Ibid.
21. Spengler, o.c., p. 1193.
22. Ibid., p. 1194.
23. Ibid., p. 1007.
24. Laqueur, o.c., pp. 131–132.
25. F. Fukuyama (Summer 1989) "The End of History," *The National Interest*.
26. "Professor Igor Panarin: Gosudarem postsovetskogo prostranstva stanet Vladimir Putin" (Professor Igor Panarin: The Ruler of the Post-Soviet Space will be Vladimir Putin) (April 1, 2009), *Izvestia*.
27. I. N. Panarin, *Raspad SShA: Mif ili realnost?* (The Disintegration of the USA: Myth or Reality?), published on Panarin's personal website www.panarin.com. Available at <http://panarin.com/doc/25/print>
28. E. Todd (2002) *Après l'Empire—Essai sur la décomposition du système américain* (Paris: Gallimard). Todd went not as far as Panarin. He only predicted the end of the American *empire*, he did not put in question the territorial integrity of the United States itself. Todd claims to be taken seriously. In his book *La chute finale* (1978) he has—rightly—predicted the disintegration of the Soviet Union, although he was not the first: the Russian dissident Andrey Amalrik made a similar prediction as early as 1970 in his famous pamphlet *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?*
29. M. Laruelle (2008) *Russian Eurasianism—An Ideology of Empire* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 117.
30. Ibid., p. 241, note 39.
31. Ibid., pp. 117–118.
32. A. Dugin, "My—Partiya natsionalnoy idei" (We—Party of the National Idea). Available at <http://www.evrazia.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=736>

33. A. Dugin (1994) *Konservativnaya Revolyutsiya*. Available (in Russian) at <http://anticompromat.ru/dugin/3put.html>
34. A. Dugin (1997) *Tampliery Proletariata*. The section to which I refer has the title "Fashizm—Bezgranichnyi i Krasnyi" (Fascism—Boundless and Red). The text (in Russian) is available at <http://anticompromat.ru/dugin/fashizm.html>
35. Ibid.
36. In his essay "The Post-Liberal Era" of 1998 all the elements of a fascist cocktail are present: he speaks of the "gradual Eurasian rebirth" of Russia, confirming his ideology of national revival, praises traditional values and modern technology, and emphasizes the important role of myth. Cf. A. Dugin (1998) "Post-Liberal Era." Available (in English) at <http://www.my.arcto.ru/public/eng/eng-lib.htm>
37. V. Zhirinovskiy (1993) *Poslednyi brodok na yug* (Moscow: Liberalno-Demokraticeskaya Partiya).
38. This goal of bringing Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey into an exclusive "sphere of influence" of Russia is also explicitly mentioned in Chapter VI on Foreign Policy of the Party program of the LDPR (cf. *Programma Liberalno-Demokraticeskoy Partii Rossii* (1999) Moscow, p. 9).
39. Zhirinovskiy, *Poslednyi brodok na yug*, o.c., p. 138.
40. Ibid., p. 103.
41. Ibid., p. 125. Zhirinovskiy, however, is not always consistent in his division of the world. In an interview, given one year after the publication of his book, he "assigns" not only West Africa but also Africa as a whole to Europe, and South-East Asia to Japan—leaving China out. (Cf. A. Umland (1994) "Ein Gespräch mit Wladimir Schirinowski," *Die neue Gesellschaft, Frankfurter Hefte*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 114–117.)
42. Zhirinovskiy, *Poslednyi brodok na yug*, o.c., p. 111.
43. Ibid., pp. 110–111.
44. Ibid., p. 112.
45. Ibid., p. 114. Zhirinovskiy, however, denies being an ultranationalist and wrote—against all appearances: "We are not chauvinist and wildly nationalist" (p. 121).
46. Ibid., p. 117.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., p. 139.
49. Ibid. Racism remains a sensitive topic for Zhirinovskiy, who himself is of partially Jewish ancestry. It could be an explanation that his racism is mainly directed against colored people and he rarely attacks "Zionism" (the Russian politically correct term that is used to express latent anti-Semitism). Only in one instance he mentioned Zionism, speaking of "American and Zionist influence" (p. 138).
50. Ibid., p. 117.
51. Cf. Umland, "Ein Gespräch mit Wladimir Schirinowski," o.c.
52. Zhirinovskiy described his meeting with Saddam Hussein as the supreme moment of his political life. "I became famous," he wrote. "I personally met with Saddam Hussein. The only foreigners he received two years after the [Gulf] war were Russians. Members of the Russian parliament went to him, leaders of different parties, journalists, but in November 1992 he took only

- me. For four hours we talked in his palace in Baghdad. It was an interesting trip (...) We talked a long time, Saddam Hussein listened, asked questions." (p. 99).
53. A. Umland (2007) "'Poslednyi brodok na yug' Zhirinovskogo i definitsiya fashizma," *Nauchnyi obshchestvenno-politicheskiy zhurnal "Bez Temy"*, No. 2(4), 2. Available (in Russian) at <http://beztemy.usu.ru>
 54. Ibid.
 55. Auteur anonyme (2008), *Projet: Russie* (Paris: Temps & Périodes).
 56. Ibid., p. 70.
 57. Ibid., p. 8.
 58. Ibid., p. 40.
 59. Ibid., p. 31.
 60. Ibid., p. 318.
 61. Cf. R. Overy (2004) *The Dictators—Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia* (London and New York: Allen Lane), p. 58.
 62. *Projet Russie*, o.c., p. 328.
 63. Ibid., p. 330.
 64. Ibid., pp. 330–31.
 65. Ibid., p. 329.
 66. V. Putin (2000) *First Person—An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait by Russia's President*, with N. Gevorkyan, N. Timakova, and A. Kolesnikov (New York: PublicAffairs), p. 186.
 67. Ibid., p. 187.
 68. *Projet Russie*, o.c., p. 235.
 69. Ibid., p. 271.
 70. Ibid., p. 272.
 71. Ibid.
 72. Ibid., p. 273.
 73. Anonymous authors (2007) *Proekt Rossiya—Vybor Puti, Vtoraya Kniga* (Moscow: Eksmo), p. 8.
 74. Ibid., p. 337.
 75. *Projet Russie*, o.c., p. 25.
 76. Ibid., p. 50.
 77. Ibid., p. 37.
 78. Ibid., p. 44.
 79. Anonymous authors, *Proekt Rossiya—Vybor Puti, Vtoraya Kniga*, o.c., p. 440.
 80. Ibid., p. 441.
 81. Ibid., pp. 442–443.
 82. Todd, *Après l'Empire*, o.c., pp. 169–70.
 83. G. Friedman (2009) *The Next Hundred Years—A Forecast for the 21st Century* (New York and London: Doubleday).
 84. Ibid., p. 144. This is not all. Friedman's geopolitical science fiction goes literally in all directions. He predicts, for instance, that Poland, after having absorbed the western portion of the former Russian empire, around the year 2045 will absorb Slovenia and Croatia and get an access to the Mediterranean via the Croatian port of Rijeka.
 85. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, o.c., p. 118.
 86. Politkovskaya, *A Russian Diary*, o.c., p. 119.
 87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.
89. Anna Politkovskaya described such a list that consisted of 47 names. Among them were the former liberal Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev, the name of the President of the Holocaust Foundation, a Georgian TV presenter, and—of course—the name of Anna Politkovskaya herself (ibid., p. 120).
90. I. Zarakhovich (August 1, 2004) "From Russia With Hate," *Time*.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Quoted by I. Zarakhovich (May 19, 2009) "Russian Neo-Nazi Movement Facing State Crackdown," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 6, No. 96.
94. M. Laruelle (2009) *In the Name of the Nation—Nationalism and Politics in Contemporary Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 57.
95. Cf. A. Shekhovtsov, "Religiozno-natsionalisticheskiy radikalizm i politicheskiy protsess—Na primere Russkogo pravoslavnogo natsional-sotsialisticheskogo dvizheniya," in A. Verkhovsky (ed.) (2007) *Verkhi i nizy Russkogo natsionalizma* (Moscow: Informatsionno-analiticheskiy tsentr "SOVA"), pp. 209–222.
96. Cf. Zarakhovich, "Russian Neo-Nazi Movement Facing State Crackdown," o.c.
97. A. Verkhovsky (ed.) (July 29, 2009) "Galina Kozhevnikova. The Spring of 2009: from Racist Killings to Political Terror" (Moscow: Informatsionno-analiticheskiy tsentr "SOVA"). Available at <http://xeno.sova-center.ru/6BA2468/6BB4208/D57F483?print=on>
98. "Rioting Erupts Near Kremlin Walls" (December 13, 2010), *The Moscow Times*.
99. Cf. O. Matthews and A. Nemtsova, "Fascist Russia?" (August 7, 2011), *Newsweek*.
100. Quoted in "Rioting Erupts Near Kremlin Walls," o.c.

5 What is Fascism?

1. A. Osborn (November 7, 2010) "'Macho man' Vladimir Putin races a Formula One car," *The Telegraph*.
2. Laruelle, *In the Name of the Nation—Nationalism and Politics in Contemporary Russia*, o.c., p. 25.
3. Politkovskaya, *A Russian Diary*, o.c., p. 71.
4. V. De Grazia (1993) *How Fascism Ruled Women, Italy 1922–1945* (Berkeley, LA and London: University of California Press), p. 43.
5. M. Belpoliti (2010) *Berlusconi—Le corps du chef* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Lignes), p. 22.
6. De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women 1922–1945*, ibid.
7. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, o.c., p. 55. Cf. also Z. Sternhell, M. Sznajder, and M. Ashéri (1989) *Naissance de l'idéologie fasciste* (Paris: Gallimard), p. 27: "Tous les futuristes ont le culte de l'énergie, du dynamisme et de la puissance, de la machine et de la vitesse, des instincts et de l'intuition, du mouvement, de la volonté et de la jeunesse."
8. F. T. Marinetti (1909) *The Futurist Manifesto*. Available at <http://cscs.umich.edu/~crshalizi/T4PM/futurist-manifesto.html>

9. Ibid.
10. H. Rosa (2005) *Beschleunigung—Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), p. 81.
11. Cf. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2005>
12. W. Laqueur (2009) *Mein 20. Jahrhundert—Stationen eines politischen Lebens* (Berlin: Propyläen), p. 154.
13. A. J. Motyl (December 3, 2007) "Inside Track: Is Putin's Russia Fascist?" *The National Interest online*. Available at: <http://www.nationalinterest.org/PrinterFriendly.aspx?id=16258>
14. Ibid., p. 2.
15. Ibid., p. 3.
16. Ibid.
17. A. Umland, *Is Putin's Russia Really "Fascist"? A Response to Alexander Motyl*, <http://www.globalpolitician.com/print.asp?id=4341>
18. Ibid.
19. Cf. R. Griffin (1993) *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge), Chapter 1; and A. Umland, "Refining the Concept of Generic Fascism," *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 298–309.
20. Information received by the author from Pavel Felgenhauer, military expert of the *Novaya Gazeta*, in a seminar in Paris on February 11, 2010.
21. An unexpected view of the Russian intentions was given when the "President" of South Ossetia some weeks after the Russian occupation asked for incorporation of South Ossetia into the Russian Federation. This demand was quickly withdrawn under Russian pressure. It is, however, highly probable that before the war this option had been discussed with the Kremlin leadership.
22. K. Marx, "Herr Vogt VIII—Dâ-Dâ Vogt und seine Studien," in *Marx Engels Werke* (1969), Band 14 (Berlin DDR: Dietz Verlag), p. 498.
23. It is interesting that in the last few years Alexander Dugin less openly exhibits his fascist credentials—without, however, rejecting the underlying fascist ideas. He has understood that, in order to be *salonfähig* and acceptable to the ruling elite, it is no problem to be a fascist, but better not to call himself openly so.
24. In December 1924, hard core radicals of the Fascist Party even sent an ultimatum to Prime Minister Mussolini, demanding him to complete the fascist revolution. As a result of their pressure Mussolini decided in January 1925 to suppress the still remaining opposition parties in parliament. (Cf. R. De Felice (2002) *Brève histoire du fascisme* (Paris: Éditions Audibert), p. 55. And R. De Felice (1995) *Mussolini il fascista II. L'organizzazione dello Stato fascista (1925–1929)* (Turin: Einaudi), Chapter 1).
25. Hitler's successor Dönitz said in 1945 (in captivity) "that in June 1934 Hitler had to navigate between two opposites: According to the radical Nazis (Röhm), the Nationalist Socialist revolution had not gone far enough; according to the conservatives (Papen), it had gone too far" (J. Lukacs (1998) *The Hitler of History* (New York: Vintage Books), p. 119). We can only measure the enormous challenge posed by SA leader Ernst Röhm to Hitler's authority, when we take into account the fact that in 1934 Röhm's SA troops, after the incorporation of the *Stahlhelm* group, were some 4.5 million strong and that he also wanted to incorporate the army in his organization. Hitler's control

- was further weakened because two-thirds of the SA men were not members of the SDAP. (Cf. I. Kershaw (2001) *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris*, London (New York: Penguin Books), pp. 502 and 741).
26. P. Milza (2001) *Les fascismes* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil), p. 126.
 27. Cf. M. Weber, "Die 'Objektivität' sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozial-politischer Erkenntnis," in M. Weber (1968) *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, edited by J. Winckelmann (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-Paul Siebeck), p. 212.
 28. U. Eco, "Ur-Fascism," in Umberto Eco (2001) *Five Moral Pieces* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harvest Books).
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
 30. *Ibid.*
 31. Other elements mentioned by Eco are that dissent is considered betrayal, that there is not so much a struggle for life, as a life for struggle, that Ur-Fascism uses Newspeak of an "impoverished vocabulary," and that it springs from individual and social frustration.
 32. Already in November 1922—scarcely one month after Mussolini's March on Rome, when Mussolini had formed a government—Grigory Zinoviev, who was Lenin's right-hand man, warned of an "epoch of fascism" at the IVth Congress of the Communist International (Komintern). (Cf. A. Bauerkämper (2006) *Der Faschismus in Europa 1918–1945* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun.), p. 19).
 33. Cf. *Hitler's Table Talk 1941–1944—His Private Conversations*, introduced and with a Preface by H. R. Trevor-Roper (2000) (New York City: Enigma Books), p. 490, where Hitler is quoted, saying, "I am firmly opposed to any attempt to export National Socialism."
 34. Giovanni Gentile and Benito Mussolini, *La Dottrina del Fascismo*, II. Dottrina politica e sociale, p. 7. Mussolini, however, was not always consequent in speaking out in favor of this universal character of Italian Fascism. In 1928, for instance, it was still denied by him, when he made the famous statement: "Fascism is not for export." (Quoted in S. G. Payne (1997) *A History of Fascism 1914–45* (London: UCL Press), p. 463).
 35. From now on we will write Fascism (with a capital F) when we refer to the Italian Fascism of the inter-war years, and fascism (with a small f) when we refer to the generic concept.
 36. Joseph Goebbels, for instance, wrote in his diary: "(Fascism) is (...) nothing like National Socialism. While the latter goes deep down to the roots, Fascism is only a superficial thing." And about Mussolini he wrote: "(The Duce) is not a revolutionary like the Führer and Stalin (sic!). He is so bound to his own Italian people that he lacks the broad qualities of a worldwide revolutionary and insurrectionist." (*The Goebbels Diaries 1942–1943*, New York, 1948, respectively p. 71 and p. 468). Quoted in H. Arendt (1973) *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich), p. 309.
 37. This opinion is expressed by G. Allardyce (1979) in his article "What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept," *American Historical Review*, No. 84, pp. 367–398). And equally by Renzo De Felice, who found that the extreme racism and anti-Semitism of the Nazi regime set it apart from Fascist Italy. But even if Fascist Italy did not organize a racist genocide, it constituted an unequivocal racist regime which in 1938 approved a racist law that forbid marriages between Italians and "elements (sic!) that belonged to

the Hamitic, Semitic and other non-Aryan races" (*Dichiarazione sulla razza, votata dal Gran Consiglio del Fascismo il 6 Ottobre 1938*).

38. It is interesting to note that in his letter to Churchill of March 15, 1942, Stalin spoke about "the battle-front against Hitlerism," and did not use the word fascism or Nazism. Possibly, Stalin had a fascination, even a secret admiration for his opponent. Did Stalin in "Stalinism" not have his own -ism? (Cf. Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate, The Second World War Volume IV*, o.c., p. 294). A special variant of the "Hitlerism" theory was developed by the German historian Golo Mann (a son of Thomas Mann), who presented Nazism as an "alien" element. "Many elements of Nazism," wrote Mann, "have been of non-German origin; starting with the title which the alien migrant [Hitler! MHVH] gave himself, the salute with which he let himself greet, which was a Roman invention; until the whole machinery of the 'total' one party state, which was copied from the Russians, the Italians." (G. Mann (1977) *Deutsche Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag), pp. 812–813). Was Golo Mann, by presenting Nazism as something "alien," also trying to disculpate the Germans?
39. Especially the book of C. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski (1956) *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), played an important role in this interpretation. It is interesting, however, that the word "totalitarian" was used for the first time by Mussolini to refer to his regime, when he wrote: "In tal senso il fascismo è totalitario" (Gentile and Mussolini, o.c., I. Idee fondamentali, p. 2).
40. Cf. Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*, o.c.
41. Allardyce, "What Fascism is not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept," o.c.
42. Sternhell, Sznajder, and Ashéri, *Naissance de l' idéologie fasciste*, o.c., p. 17.
43. Weber called this process of accumulation in an ideal type a *gedankliche Steigerung* (elevation through thinking). Cf. M. Weber, "Die 'Objektivität' sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis," in Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, o.c., p. 190.
44. Weber did not yet mention "fascism." He died in June 1920, just before fascism started its ascent in Europe. But it is clear that for him "fascism" would have represented a similar complex historical phenomenon as "liberalism" or "imperialism." It would have been an excellent candidate to be analyzed with the help of an ideal type. This opinion is shared by Stefan Breuer, who wrote that Weber has "supplied important building blocks in order to construct an ideal type that can be applied to fascist parties" (Cf. S. Breuer, "Max Webers Parteisoziolegie und das Problem des Faschismus," in G. Albert, A. Bienfait, S. Sigmund, and C. Wendt (eds) (2003) *Das Weber-Paradigma*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), p. 353). Weber's ideal types are equally applicable to smaller phenomena, such as fascist parties, as to broader phenomena, such as fascist movements and regimes. Ernst Nolte, however, was critical of using ideal types for the analysis of fascism. He wrote that "the construction of an ideal type as an only imagined radical fascism that is built from the most extreme traits of all fascisms seems not be very fruitful" (Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*, o.c., p. 22). Nolte seems not to have understood the *heuristic* significance of ideal types. Building ideal types might have prevented him from considering the anti-Marxism of Italian Fascism and German Nazism the central characteristic of both fascisms.

6 Defining Fascism: The “Thin” Method

1. Cf. R. Griffin (1993) *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge), p. 13.
2. Ibid., p. 26.
3. Ibid., p. 37.
4. Cf. Paxton, o.c., p. 20.
5. Ibid.
6. One of those is Karl Dietrich Bracher, who spoke about “the problematic character of a generic term that was derived from Fascism which also included National Socialism.” K. D. Bracher, “Faschismus,” in E. Fraenkel and K. D. Bracher (1978) *Staat und Politik* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag), p. 85.
7. Paxton, o.c., pp. 20–21.
8. One could discuss whether fascism was not primarily a praxis that only later developed into a fully-fledged ideology. Ernst Nolte, for instance wrote: “As concerns the ideology, it was said that the act preceded the doctrine, an allusion to the lacking theoretical consistency of Fascism.” Nolte added, however, “If the name national Fascism at first seems to indicate a method (...), it equally indicates the goal: the nation is for it the object of all the endeavors (...) It is concerned about the ‘welfare’ of the nation. Of course ‘welfare’ can be interpreted in very different ways.” (Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*, o.c., p. 283). Indeed, every political praxis, how inadequate it may appear at first sight, has an underlying theoretical frame of reference (irrespective of how primitive this may be) that motivates the action.
9. For Mussolini the fatherland was literally “divine.” “The Fatherland,” he wrote, “is no illusion! It is the sweetest, greatest, most human, most divine of realities!” (Mussolini, “Fascism as the Creator of the Third Italian Civilization,” in Griffin (ed.), *Fascism*, o.c., p. 57).
10. It is this fact that makes fascism a pre-eminent modern phenomenon: it is intimately linked with the emergence of modern mass democracies. As Barrington Moore noted: “fascism is inconceivable without democracy or what is sometimes more turgidly called the entrance of the masses onto the historical stage” (B. Moore, Jr. (1991) *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy—Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (London and New York: Penguin Books), p. 447).
11. Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*, o.c., p. 287. (My emphasis, MHVH.)
12. M. Mann (2004) *Fascists* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 12.
13. P. de Lara, “Introduction,” in P. de Lara (ed.) (2011) *Naissances du totalitarisme* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf), p. 12.
14. P. de Lara, “Pour une anthropologie du totalitarisme,” in P. de Lara, *Naissances du totalitarisme*, o.c., p. 16.
15. The “25 points” program was published on February 24, 1920, the day that the *Deutsche Arbeiter Partei* (DAP) changed its name into NSDAP. Hitler was one of the three authors of this program, which was declared by him to be unchangeable. It remained the official NSDAP program until the end of the Third Reich.
16. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, o.c., p. 742.

17. Ibid., p. 740. In a speech in the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, Hitler said that he refused to believe "that God has permitted some nations first to acquire a world by force and then to defend this robbery with moralizing theories" (quoted in Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939*, o.c., 2001, p. 77). Carr commented that "the warmongering of the dissatisfied Powers was the 'natural, cynical reaction' to the sentimental and dishonest platitudinizing of the satisfied Powers on the common interest in peace." Carr's extreme realist position that completely relativized international law was a welcome ideological support for Hitler's bellicose imperialism.
18. F. Borkenau (1939) *The New German Empire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), p. 14. (My italics, MHVH.)
19. Cf. A. Gramsci, "Note sul'attezzamento nazionale e sulla politica italiana," in A. Gramsci (1971) *Note sul Machiavelli* (Roma: Editori Riuniti), p. 260.
20. G. Lukács (1966) *Von Nietzsche zu Hitler oder Der Irrationalismus und die deutsche Politik* (Frankfurt am Main and Hamburg: Fischer), p. 252.
21. Borkenau, o.c., pp. 25–26. (My emphasis, MHVH.) Another author who stressed this systemic imperialist dynamic of fascist regimes was Filippo Turati, who wrote: "To maintain itself in power, fascism is forced to keep the bellicose spirit of its adherents in permanent and ever growing tension. It must hide its goal of repressing and exploiting the workers with the magical tools and bait of national preference, of necessary expansion, of the conquest of markets, of empire and imperialism, that means of the war of aggression against other nations" (Cf. F. Turati, "Faschismus, Sozialismus und Demokratie," in E. Nolte (1967) *Theorien über den Faschismus* (Cologne and Berlin Kiepenheuer & Witsch), p. 150).
22. Borkenau, o.c., ibid.
23. Marx, "Herr Vogt VIII—Dâ-Dâ Vogt und seine Studien," o.c., p. 498.
24. Quoted by Z. Sternhell in "Fascist Ideology," in W. Laqueur (ed.) (1978) *Fascism—A Reader's Guide* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), p. 334.
25. F. T. Marinetti, "The War as the Catharsis of Italian Society," in Griffin (ed.), *Fascism*, o.c., p. 26.
26. Griffin, ibid., p. 41.
27. R. Farinacci, "The War as the Midwife of a New Italian People," in Griffin, ibid., p. 32.
28. A. Rocco, "From the Old Italy to the New," in Griffin, o.c., p. 32.
29. G. Simmel, "Deutschlands innere Wandlung," in G. Simmel (1999) *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 16 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), p. 29.
30. Ibid.
31. Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*, o.c., p. 397.
32. Hans Joas wrote "Mussolini and leading Italian intellectuals (...) declared the war to be itself a revolution—not, like the Bolsheviks, as a favorable condition for the revolution and not, as the German existential bellicists, as a one-off internal transformation of man" (H. Joas, "Die Modernität des Krieges—Die Modernisierungstheorie und das Problem der Gewalt," in W. Knöbl and G. Schmidt (eds) (2000) *Die Gegenwart des Krieges—Staatliche Gewalt in der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH), p. 187).
33. Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*, o.c., p. 494.

34. J. de Maistre, "The Saint Petersburg Dialogues," in *The Works of Joseph de Maistre* (1971) selected, translated, and introduced by Jack Lively, with a new foreword by Robert Nisbet (New York: Schocken Books), p. 253. A similar positive assessment of war based on his teleological philosophy of history, can be found in Hegel, who wrote: "But even when we consider history the slaughter-table on which the happiness of the peoples, the wisdom of the states and the virtue of the individuals are sacrificed, necessarily the question emerges for whom, for what final goal these most terrible sacrifices have been made" (G. W. F. Hegel (1970) *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, Werke, Band 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), p. 35).
35. de Maistre, "The Saint Petersburg Dialogues," o.c., p. 254.
36. It was Lenin's concept of the avant-garde role of the Party that led to the split between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks in 1903. This break occurred over the Party statutes in which Lenin's draft read: "A member of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party is any person who accepts its program, supports the party with material means and *personally participates* in one of its organizations." Lenin did not want "paper members." Already in 1900 he wrote: "We must train people who shall devote to the party not only their spare evenings, but the whole of their lives. Two years later he formulated this demand more precisely, wanting "to restrict the membership of this organization to persons who are engaged in revolution as a profession." (Quoted in L. Coser (1964) *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York and London: The Free Press), p. 98). (My emphasis, MHVH).
37. J. de Kadt (1980) *Fascisme en de nieuwe vrijheid* (Fascism and the New Freedom) (Amsterdam: G. A. Van Oorschot), p. 155. In his book De Kadt not only predicted the Second World War and the victory of the Allied forces, but also the coming of a bi-polar post-war world, dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union.
38. Ibid., p. 154.
39. Ibid., p. 159.
40. Ibid., p. 171.
41. Again, De Kadt was here extremely prescient. On October 17, 1933, within nine months of Hitler's accession to power, he published a critical article on Germany in the left-wing magazine *De Fakkel* (The Torch) with the title "Fascism is War." His conclusion was: "Fascism is murder at home, fascism is war abroad" (J. de Kadt, "Fascisme is oorlog" (Fascism is War), in J. de Kadt (1991) *De deftigheid in het gedrang—Een keuze uit zijn verspreide geschriften* (Amsterdam: G. A. Van Oorschot), p. 54).
42. R. Koselleck (1973) *Kritik und Krise—eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), p. XI.
43. D. D. Roberts (1979) *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 118.
44. Cf. Sternhell, o.c., p. 335.
45. This goal of fascist imperialist conquest: to ease class tensions by a colonial "outlet," was taken seriously by Mussolini's government. In 1940, for instance, after two mass emigrations, nearly 40 percent of the 110,000 Italians living in Libya were agricultural colonists, most of them former landless peasants. (Cf. C. G. Segré (1972) "Italo Balbo and the Colonization of Libya," in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 141–155).

7 Defining Fascism: The “Thick” Method

1. E. Gentile (2004) *Qu'est-ce que le fascisme? Histoire et interprétation* (Paris: Gallimard), pp. 119–122. Emilio Gentile distinguished only three dimensions: organizational, cultural and institutional. He included ideology in the cultural dimension. I will present ideology as a separate dimension, because it stands apart from the nonverbal expressions of culture, such as symbols, greetings, life style, and clothing.
2. Cf. M. Mann, “The Contradictions of Continuous Revolution,” in I. Kershaw and M. Lewin (1997) *Stalinism and Nazism—Dictatorships in Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 140: “The most recent research on party members and voters shows that the Nazis were, as they claimed, a national party, a *Volkspartei*, drawing support from all social classes for their supposedly national goals.”
3. In Germany this double strategy was only firmly adopted after Hitler’s failed Beer Hall Putsch in Munich in 1923.
4. After the Beer Hall Putsch, the SA was disbanded. It was re-founded in 1925.
5. Breuer, “Max Webers Parteisozologie und das Problem des Faschismus,” o.c., p. 360. As concerns the numbers given by Breuer, we have to take into account that Prussia, at that time, had a population of about 38 million—compared with about 63 million for Germany as a whole. Because Prussia had approximately 60 percent of the total German population, we may assume that the total number of victims of violent action in Germany nationwide must have been considerably higher. However, as Robert Paxton rightly remarked, on the whole, “Italian Fascism was bloodier than Nazism before power.” (Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, o.c., p. 237).
6. E. Voegelin (2007) *Die politischen Religionen* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag). First published in 1938. One month after its publication Voegelin got a *Berufsverbot* and was excluded from the university. He emigrated the same year to the United States.
7. Voegelin, o.c., p. 53.
8. P. Sloterdijk and H.-J. Heinrichs (2001) *Die Sonne und der Tod—Dialogische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), p. 68.
9. Ibid., pp. 68–69.
10. Ibid., p. 69.
11. And even here we must make a certain reservation in order not to fall back in a too simplistic *Priestertrug* theory: it must not be excluded that some Nazi ideologues themselves *believed* the myths they invented.
12. An example is Kurt Ludecke, one of Hitler’s early associates, who later recorded his impressions on first hearing him speak in 1922: “My critical faculty was swept away. (...) He was holding the masses, and me with them, under an hypnotic spell by the sheer force of his conviction (...) The gospel he preached [was] a sacred truth. He seemed another Luther. I forgot everything but the man; then glancing around, I saw that his magnetism was holding these thousands as one. (...) I experienced an exaltation that could be likened only to religious conversion” (in J. Noakes and G. Pridham (eds) (1998) *Nazism 1919–1945, Volume I—The Rise to Power 1919–1934* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press), p. 18).

13. Borkenau, *The New German Empire*, o.c., pp. 21–22.
14. This contempt for minorities was especially present in Nazi Germany, where a concern for “racial purity” led to the annihilation of minorities and individuals who were considered to represent *lebensunwertes Leben* (life unworthy of life). These included among others the mentally ill, people with disabilities, Jews, criminals, homosexuals, gypsies, Roma, communists, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.
15. Achille Starace, national secretary of the Italian Fascist Party between 1931 and 1939, who was a fervent admirer of Nazi Germany, wanted to give the *saluto romano* the same widespread use in the daily life of the Italians as the Hitler salute in Germany. He did not succeed, however.
16. An excellent analysis of the role the Hitler salute played in the disintegration of German civil society is made by T. Allert (2008) in *The Hitler Salute—On the Meaning of a Gesture* (New York: Picador). According to Allert, “the mistrust engendered by the Hitler greeting gave it a pernicious power. It restricted people’s options in presenting themselves to others (...) The German greeting (...) created distance (...) it helped pave the way for the individual’s self-negation (...) Mistrust combined with a readiness to denounce others formed a sinister hybrid that grew in the rotting soil of a languishing social sensibility” (p. 66). The result was that “people limited their social contacts and retreated into trusted, reliable circles of family and friends. Under these circumstances, a culture of universal suspicion flourished” (p. 67).
17. While attacking the socialism of socialists and Marxists, Hitler in a shrewd way appropriated the word “socialism” to coin the new concept of “national socialism.” J. Van Doorn has showed that this appropriation of the title “socialist” by the Nazis was preceded by a process in which German socialism had become less internationalist and more nationalist, thereby unwillingly preparing this appropriation by the Nazis. (Cf. J. A. A. Van Doorn (2008) *Duits socialisme—Het falen van de sociaal-democratie en de triomf van het nationaal-socialisme* (German Socialism—The Failure of Social Democracy and the Triumph of National Socialism) (Amsterdam: Mets & Schilt)). In his provocative book *Liberal Fascism*, Jonah Goldberg’s approach is the other way round. Goldberg goes so far as to ascribe many elements of fascism to traditions of the left. “Fascism,” according to him, “properly understood, is not a phenomenon of the right at all. Instead, it is, and always has been, a phenomenon of the left” (J. Goldberg (2007) *Liberal Fascism—The Secret History of the Left from Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning* (London and New York: Penguin Books), p. 7).
18. On May 2, 1933, three months after Hitler’s accession to power, the buildings of the German trade unions were occupied by the SA and the trade union leaders arrested. The trade unions were abolished and their possessions confiscated by the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (DAF), a Nazi “trade union” in which both employers and employees were organized.
19. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, o.c., p. 166.
20. A. Gillette (2008) *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* (London: Routledge), p. 50.
21. Ibid., p. 57.
22. B. Mussolini, “The Strength in Number,” in Griffin (ed.), *Fascism*, o.c., p. 59.

23. Cf. A. Carioti (November 16, 2009) "Mussolini segreto nei diari della Petacci," *Corriere della Sera*.
24. This characteristic of Fascist Italy was already analyzed by Franz Borkenau in an article published in February 1933, where he wrote that "it is true that Fascism in Italy has elevated itself as a Party independently over the fundamental classes and it is true that it leaned in this process on the mass of petty bourgeois" (F. Borkenau, "Zur Soziologie des Faschismus," originally published in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 68. Band, 5. Heft, February 1933. Republished in Nolte, *Theorien über den Faschismus*, o.c., p. 165). In his book *The New German Empire* Borkenau claimed that this analysis was also valid for the Nazi regime: "With the advent of Nazi-ism [sic], a political body recruited from all classes, *but independent from them all* has taken power in its hands and established its absolute domination. (...) Nothing in its structure compelled it to submit or even to listen to the wishes of any segment of the population" (Borkenau, o.c., p. 21, My emphasis, MHVH).
25. Renzo De Felice wrote: "En effet, en Union Soviétique comme dans l'Allemagne nazie, l'État est subordonné au parti et donc phagocyté par celui-ci, alors que l'Italie connaît un processus inverse: le centre du régime, c'est l'État, et le parti est dans un certain sens relégué dans un rôle secondaire; et si la construction et le salut de l'État l'exigent, le parti est même prêt à être totalementement sacrifié" (De Felice, *Brève histoire du fascisme*, o.c., p. 60).
26. Robert Paxton called the first the normative state, the second the prerogative state. Between both a continuing battle was going on in which the prerogative state, by creating "parallel institutions," wanted to implement its own policies and get rid of the constraints of the normative state (Paxton, o.c., passim). Erhard Eppler spoke about the Nazi *Doppelstaat* (double state), in which the civil *Normenstaat* (normative state) opposed the *Maßnahmenstaat* (decree state). (E. Eppler (2005) *Auslaufmodell Staat* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp). "The decree state," wrote Eppler, "was totally incalculable and subject to barbaric arbitrariness" (p. 15).
27. Gentile, *Qu'est-ce que le fascisme?* o.c., p. 57.
28. According to Hannah Arendt, "Mussolini's Fascism, which up to 1938 was not totalitarian but just an ordinary nationalist dictatorship developed logically from a multiparty democracy" (Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, o.c., p. 257). One can, indeed, ask oneself if, before 1938, Mussolini's Italy was "just an ordinary nationalist dictatorship." It certainly was not.
29. C. J. Friedrich and Z. K. Brzezinski (1965) *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
30. Cf. D. Germino, "Der italienische Faschismus in vergleichender Perspektive," in Nolte, *Theorien über den Faschismus*, o.c., p. 443.
31. Ibid.
32. Cf. "Mussolini non ha mai ammazzato nessuno" (September 11, 2003), *Corriere della Sera*.
33. R. J. B. Bosworth (2006) *Mussolini's Italy—Life under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915–1945* (New York: Penguin Press), p. 367.
34. Cf. Bosworth, o.c., p. 384.
35. Ibid., p. 381.

8 Putinism and Fascism: The 11 Differences (Part I)

1. As concerns Hitler's seizure of power we have to remind ourselves of the words of Herbert Münkler that "what was staged by Goebbels as "Machtergreifung" was originally nothing else than the formation of a government according to the rules of parliamentarism. It was, certainly, a government of the anti-parliamentarian right that was formed under Reich Chancellor Hitler, which from that moment with determination tried to abolish the rules according to which it had been formed" (H. Münkler (2010) *Mitte und Maß—Der Kampf um die richtige Ordnung* (Berlin: Rowohlt—Berlin Verlag GmbH), p. 214). The same, *mutatis mutandis*, was true for Mussolini who was invited by the King of Italy Victor Emmanuel III to form a government.
2. At the same time, in Stalin's Soviet Union it was taboo to use the term "National Socialism" for Hitler's regime, apparently to avoid any confusion with Russian socialism. "Some time around 1931–1932 the usage of the term 'National Socialist' was forbidden in Soviet Russia, presumably on Stalin's orders," wrote John Lukács. "National, instead of 'international' socialism was more and more applicable to Stalin's Russia in the 1930s, whence it was best to avoid the usage of such a term" (J. Lukács (2005) *Democracy and Populism—Fear and Hatred* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 117).
3. Stalin's Soviet Russia did, of course, not deny that other countries, such as Britain and the US, had played a role in the struggle against fascism. However, the role of Soviet Russia was considered to have been decisive, an opinion that seemed to be supported by the fact that the Soviet Union lost about 20 million people in the war, the highest number of victims of a single country in the Second World War which by far exceeded the losses of the attacking country Germany (about 8 million people). It is interesting to note how differently the war was interpreted by Moscow before and after the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. "During the period up to the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941," wrote Irving Louis Horowitz, "the 'equal guilt' doctrine was applied. The War was a continuation of imperialist rivalries between the United States and England on one side, and Germany, Italy and Japan on the other. (...) With the entrance of the Soviet Union into the war, it was branded as primarily a war against fascism" (I. L. Horowitz (1973) *War and Peace in Contemporary Social and Philosophical Theory* (London: Souvenir Press—Educational and Academic), pp. 121–122).
4. Cf. Rummel, *Death by Government*, o.c., p. 83.
5. Cf. C. Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," in P. Paret (ed.) (1986) *Makers of Modern Strategy—from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p. 668: "Stalin seems to have believed, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that many generals were pro-German and politically unreliable. The consequences of his decision to purge the military were immense. Roughly 60 percent of officers at the level of division commander or above fell victim to the purge; the officer corps as a whole was depleted by 20 to 35 percent. A few commanders survived (...). But many of the Soviet Union's best military minds (...) were executed."
6. Conducting sociological research on rural family life, Gorbachev's wife, Raisa, visited many households in the Stavropol region in the 1960s

with questionnaires. In her biography she told how she found there “the immense pain of the war, of which the consequences continued to impact on the life of the country, even after the war had ended twenty years ago. By conducting sociological research on family life, I have discovered that in the region of Stavropol one household in four or five consisted of a single woman. Can you imagine that? A woman who has lost everything, whose life is literally devastated by the war (...) Women who have never known the joy of love and motherhood.” (Cf. R. Gorbachev (1991) *Ma vie*, Entretiens avec Georgui Pryakhine (Paris: Olivier Orban), p. 104).

7. G. F. Kennan, “Russia—Seven Years Later,” annex to G. F. Kennan (1967) *Memoirs 1925–1950* (New York: Pantheon Books), p. 504.
8. Cf. Laqueur, *Black Hundred—The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia*, o.c., Introduction, p. xii.
9. Security Police of the Republic of Estonia, *Annual Review 2010*, p. 13.
10. We should, however, not forget that a strong eugenic racism already played an important role in Italy before the conquest of Abyssinia. “The personal obsession Mussolini had with ‘physical health and that of the race,’ with eugenics and demographic growth,” wrote Emilio Gentile, “contributed in a decisive way to the development of the ‘New Italian’: ‘We must, therefore, seriously look after the destiny of the race, we must take care of the race, to begin with motherhood and early childhood,’ he [Mussolini] declared on May 26, 1927 in his famous Ascension Speech” (Gentile, *Qu’est-ce que le fascisme? Histoire et interprétation*, o.c., p. 376).
11. According to the Italian philosopher Norberto Bobbio, “A real and indigenous Italian racist ideology does not exist: also during the racist anti-Semitic campaign of fascism attempts remained scarce to adopt in our country racist ideologies that emerged elsewhere. [They] were seldom heard of.” (N. Bobbio, “Razzismo oggi,” in Bobbio, *Elogio della mitezza e altri scritti morali*, o.c., p. 132). This may be true in the case of Italian anti-Semitism. Because anti-Semitism was less rampant in Italy than in Germany there exists in contemporary Italy a tendency to underestimate the racism of Mussolini’s regime that was directed against black Africans. This racism was certainly more implicit and less ideologically elaborated than in Germany, but it was founded on the same premises of the inequality of the races and the right of the superior (white) race to dominate the inferior race.
12. “Statistics of Racist and Neo-Nazi Attacks between 2004–2009 (by city),” SOVA Center, Moscow.
13. V. Putin (January 23, 2012) “Rossiya: natsionalnyi vopros,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. English version available at <http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/17831/print/>
14. This was the case, for example, for the—now forbidden—Movement Against Illegal Immigration DPNI. Cf. A. Verkhovsky and G. Kozhenikova (2009) *Radikalnyi Russkiy natsionalizm—struktury, idei, litsa* (Moscow: Informatsionno-analiticheskiy tsentr “SOVA”), p. 29, where the authors wrote: “Until 2007 the DPNI was totally loyal to President Putin.” Another right-extremist organization, the Narodnyi Soyuz, whose members admired Mussolini and Franco, had also a positive opinion of Putin because of his efforts to revive “the national spirit” (ibid., p. 47). Even an openly neo-Nazi movement that preached a totalitarian regime, such as the Partiya Svoboda, supported Putin

- at the beginning, calling him "a man with a clear conscience (...) thinking in categories of government and nation" (ibid., p. 77).
15. C. Clover (December 3, 2010) "The Skinhead Terrorists," *Financial Times*.
 16. L. Harding (2011) *Mafia State—How One Reporter became an Enemy of the Brutal New Russia* (London: Guardian Books), p. 183.
 17. Cf. M. Leroyer (November 23, 2011) "Pour contrer les nationalistes, Medvedev fait la chasse aux Tadjiks," *Le Figaro*.
 18. A. Odynova (November 15, 2011) "Kremlin Says Tajik Hunt Not Political," *The Moscow Times*.
 19. R. Dahrendorf (2003) *Auf der Suche nach einer neuen Ordnung* (Munich: C. H. Beck), p. 127.
 20. J. Stuart Mill (1962) *Considerations on Representative Government* (with an introduction by F. A. Hayek) (South Bend, Indiana: Gateway Editions), p. 56.
 21. Ibid., pp. 56–57.
 22. Ibid., p. 52.
 23. Ibid., p. 51.
 24. H. Arendt (1970) *On Violence* (New York and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich), p. 55.
 25. Many Western analysts—motivated by wishful thinking—tended to consider Medvedev's presidency as the virtual formation of a second autonomous power center alongside that of Putin. They have fallen into the trap that has deliberately been set up. Dmitry Medvedev (whom Putin called with the patronizing diminutive *Dimchik*) was from the beginning Putin's faithful servant.
 26. F. Neumann, "Notizen zur Theorie der Diktatur," in F. Neumann (1967) *Demokratischer und autoritärer Staat—Beiträge zur Soziologie der Politik* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt), p. 162.
 27. H. Arendt, "The Ex-Communists," in H. Arendt (1994) *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954, Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books), p. 399.
 28. It is still unclear in what kind of NKVD unit Putin's father served during the war: in a reconnaissance unit, as is officially claimed but not documented, or in one of the cut-off (*zagraditelnye*) units whose task it was to execute deserting Red Army soldiers. According to Gordon Bennett, "More penetrating inquiries about the nature of the unit's activities might have brought politically embarrassing answers, such as that Putin senior served in a cut-off unit or in the effective but brutal military counterintelligence organization 'SMERSH'" (G. Bennett (August 2002) "Vladimir Putin & Russia's Special Services," Conflict Studies Research Centre, C 108, p. 5).
 29. Cf. Putin, *First Person—An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait by Russia's President*, o.c., pp. 11–12.
 30. Ibid., p. 12.
 31. A. Blomfeld (February 23, 2008) "Orthodox Church's unholy alliance with Putin," *Telegraph*.
 32. Ibid.
 33. L. Okorokova (November 24, 2011) "Patriarch Kirill moves to the Kremlin," *The Moscow News*.
 34. Cf. M. Elder (February 15, 2010) "The Russian Orthodox Church's growing power," *GlobalPost*.

35. "Putin gives boost to law on church property" (January 14, 2010), *RIA Novosti*.
36. S. Kishkovsky (November 23, 2010) "Russia to Return Church Property," *The New York Times*. The law also addresses confiscated property of the other religions, but this only represents a small percentage.
37. R. Griffin (2007) *Modernism and Fascism—The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 226.
38. M. Gauchet (2010) *L'avènement de la démocratie III—À l'épreuve des totalitarismes 1914—1974* (Paris: Gallimard), pp. 386–387.
39. Cf. P. Thibaud, "Le contre-catholicisme de Adolf Hitler," in de Lara (ed.), *Naissances du totalitarisme*, o.c., pp. 111–156.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
41. Cf. Voegelin, *Die politischen Religionen*, o.c., p. 17.
42. C. J. Levy (April 24, 2008) "At Expense of All Others, Putin Picks a Church," *The New York Times*.
43. Cf. K. O'Flynn (July 28, 2010), "For Russia's Future Priests, An Education in Church-State Ties," *RFERL*.
44. This opinion that these groups are pro-American is not restricted to the Russian government, but sometimes shared by Americans. Walter Russell Mead, for instance, wrote: "the fastest growing force within global Christianity is the most pro-American group within it: the global Pentecostal movement has grown from zero to something like half a billion members in the last 100 years. (...) For Pentecostals (...) America and its friends are seen as good guys upholding freedom of religion (...) and promoting economic development." (W. Russell Mead (May 28, 2010) "Pentecost Power," *The American Interest Online*).
45. The present situation shows some resemblance with the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Orthodox clergy, confronted with a wave of conversions to Catholicism by leading Russian families, started a campaign against this "Western proselytism." This proselytism came under pressure in 1812 when Tsar Alexander I ended the liberal reforms of Mikhail Speransky and returned to autocracy. (Cf. P. Glaudes and J.M. de Maistre (2007), *Oeuvres: suivis d'un Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, (Paris: Robert Laffont), p. 1274).
46. A. Sever (2008) *Istoriya KGB* (Moscow: Algoritm), p. 276.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

9 Putinism and Fascism: The 11 Differences (Part II)

1. Senator John McCain on October 16, 2007.
2. Even today it is not yet an established fact if the August coup was genuine or orchestrated. One of the theories is that it was an operetta coup organized by the leadership—Gorbachev included—and that its failure was planned. The aim would have been to show the West that the popular Gorbachev was in danger and that he should have been supported. Yeltsin's unforeseen intervention, however, would have prevented the realization of this plan and have totally changed its final outcome. (Cf. T. Wolton (2008) *Le KGB*

au pouvoir—le système Poutine (Paris: Gallimard), pp. 61–77.) These accusations were vehemently denied by Gorbachev before the Russian Parliament. “Fielding questions from angry lawmakers,” wrote the *New York Times*, “Mr. Gorbachev became angry when asked about assertions that he might somehow have known about the plot in advance as part of some even grander intrigue. He dismissed this as “sheer invention” circulated desperately by defeated plotters” (F. X. Clines (August 23, 1991) “After the Coup: Yeltsin is Routing Communist Party from Key Roles Throughout Russia; He Forces Vast Gorbachev Shake-Up; Soviet President Is Heckled by the Republic’s Parliament,” *The New York Times*; in B. Gwertzman and M. T. Kaufman (eds) (1992) *The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Times Books), p. 424). Reliable evidence for Gorbachev’s version can be found in the biography of his wife Raisa, who gave a detailed account of the fearful days that they were kept hostage in their holiday residence in Sochi. Tensions were so high that Raisa suffered a slight heart attack. (Cf. Gorbachev, *Ma Vie*, o.c., pp. 213–219.)

3. The exact number of the KGB personnel has always remained a state secret. According to Aleksandr Sever, the total number of agents was 490,000 in 1989. These included 220,000 border guards and 60,000 government protection troops (Sever, *Istoriya KGB*, o.c., p. 301). Andreï Kozovoï gives the same figures: “In 1989 the number of persons working for the KGB is estimated at 490,000 of which 220,000 are border guards.” (Cf. A. Kozovoï (2010) *Les services secrets Russes—Des tsars à Poutine* (Paris: Tallandier), p. 275.) Thierry Wolton, however, estimated its effectiveness in the 1980s: 700,000 officers and 200,000 border guards with additionally 6 million informants. (Cf. Wolton, *Le KGB au pouvoir—le système Poutine*, o.c., p. 25.) Former US President Nixon gives the same total of 900,000 for the end of the 1980s, but he included the personnel of the military intelligence agency GRU in this figure. Nixon compares this number with a total of 35,000 for the US intelligence agencies (cf. Nixon, *Seize the Moment—America’s Challenge in a One-Superpower World*, o.c., p. 93). After the fall of the Soviet Union and the reorganization of the KGB, the staff of the FSB, its main successor organization, numbered 92,000. (Cf. Bennett, “Vladimir Putin and Russia’s Special Services,” o.c., p. 15.) Ten years later, after ten years of Putinism, this number had more than *doubled* to 200,000. According to Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, this number is even “a cautious estimate” (A. Soldatov and I. Borogan (2010) *The New Nobility—The Rebirth of the Russian Security State* (New York: Public Affairs), p. 5).
4. Cf. Wolton, *Le KGB au pouvoir—le système Poutine*, o.c., p. 244.
5. The KGB has not only been compared with Western intelligence services. The French historian Hélène Carrère d’Encausse went even so far as to compare the KGB with the ENA, the French elite school for future members of the state bureaucracy. On March 29, 2000, she declared in a speech at the *Forum du futur*: “The KGB in Russia, that’s like the ENA in Paris. It was the KGB that trained the staff of the administration, it was the KGB that recruited the most intelligent people, it was the KGB that hired people with the highest degrees. There was no other school. The spy part that one knows is not important and is of no interest today. The KGB was the institution that trained the representative staff. That’s how one should see it” (quoted

- in V. Fédorovski (2007) *De Raspoutine à Poutine—Les hommes de l'ombre* (Paris: Perrin), pp. 114–115).
6. Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive—The KGB in Europe and the West*, o.c., p. 708.
 7. Cf. Waller, *Secret Empire—The KGB in Russia Today*, o.c., p. 291. The multitude of changing acronyms used for the Russian secret service is dazzling: VeCheka, Cheka, GPU, OGPU, GUGB, NKGB, GUGB again, NKGB again, MGB, KGB (respectively KGB of the Council of Ministers, KGB of the USSR, and, in post-Soviet Russia, the RSFSR KGB), AFB, MBVD, MB, FSK, and, finally: FSB. The old names are left behind on the blood stained soil of Russian history, remnants of failed attempts to hide its ugly past.
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
 9. Y. Albats (1994) *State within a State—The KGB and its Hold on Russia—Past, Present and Future* (New York: Farrar-Straus-Giroux), p. 311.
 10. Waller, *Secret Empire—The KGB in Russia Today*, o.c., p. 86.
 11. The Ministry of Security (MB) combined the functions of the former Second, Third and Fifth Chief Directorates and the Seventh Directorate. The Second Chief Directorate was responsible for internal political control and the Third Chief Directorate for the political surveillance of the armed forces. The Fifth Chief Directorate dealt with censorship and the surveillance of political, religious, and artistic dissent. The Seventh Directorate, more generally, was tasked with the surveillance of Soviet citizens and foreigners.
 12. Waller, *Secret Empire—The KGB in Russia Today*, o.c., p. 123.
 13. Cf. Soldatov and Borogan, *The New Nobility—The Rebirth of the Russian Security State*, o.c., p. 13.
 14. A. Kosovoï also believed that the United States was a model for the separation of the SVR and FSB. He wrote that “the influence of the United States, where the structure of the intelligence is double (FBI/CIA) is evident. Cultural transfers equally exist, as one can see, in espionage” (Kosovoï, *Les services secrets Russes—Des tsars à Poutine*, o.c., p. 297).
 15. B. Whitmore (November 12, 2010) “Mergers and Acquisitions,” *RFE/RL*.
 16. “V Rossiï ozhidaetsya sliyanie spetssluzhb” (July 27, 2011), *Argumenty.ru*.
 17. Cf. S. Ptichkin, “V razvedku ne vernetsya” (September 28, 2011), *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*.
 18. M. Galeotti (October 20, 2011) “Spooks Under Fire,” *The Moscow News*.
 19. Waller, *Secret Empire—The KGB in Russia Today*, o.c., p. 148.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
 21. Albats, *State within a State—The KGB and its Hold on Russia—Past, Present and Future*, o.c., p. 310.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 308.
 23. H. Arendt, “The Ex-Communists,” in Arendt, *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954, Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, o.c., p. 399.
 24. Waller, *Secret Empire—The KGB in Russia Today*, o.c., p. 22.
 25. S. Handelmann (March–April 1994) “The Russian ‘Mafiya,’” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2, p. 83.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
 28. Quoted in J. Littell (2006) “The Security Organs of the Russian Federation. A Brief History 1991–2004,” *Post-Soviet Armies Newsletter*, p. 48.

29. Quoted in LeVine, *Putin's Labyrinth—Spies, Murder, and the Dark Heart of Russia*, o.c., p. 34.
30. L. M. Martin-Bittman (January–February 2000), “Disinforming the Public,” *Perspective*, Vol. X, No. 3.
31. E. Lucas (September 17, 2010) “State Security, Post-Soviet Style,” *The Wall Street Journal*. In his book *Deception* Edward Lucas described this process as “the story of how the ex-spooks and their friends, in effect in a criminal conspiracy, took over one of the world’s largest countries, hugely enriching themselves and duping the West. Their modus operandi fuses organised crime, big business, conventional diplomacy—and intelligence.” (E. Lucas (2012) *Deception—Spies, Lies and How Russia Dupes the West* (London and Berlin: Bloomsbury), p. 7).
32. Soldatov and Borogan, *The New Nobility*, o.c., p. 5.
33. L. Harding (December 1, 2010), “WikiLeaks cables condemn Russia as ‘mafia state,’” *The Guardian*. “Russia is a corrupt, autocratic kleptocracy centred on the leadership of Vladimir Putin,” wrote *The Guardian*, “in which officials, oligarchs and organised crime are bound together to create a ‘virtual mafia state’, according to leaked secret diplomatic cables that provide a damning American assessment of its erstwhile rival power. Arms trafficking, money laundering, personal enrichment, protection for gangsters, extortion and kickbacks, suitcases full of money and secret offshore bank accounts in Cyprus: the cables paint a bleak picture of a political system in which bribery alone totals an estimated \$300 bn a year, and in which it is often hard to distinguish between activities of the government and organised crime.” This article was, according to Harding, the probable reason that his visa was not renewed and he had to leave Russia in May 2011. (Cf. Harding, *Mafia State*, o.c., pp. 261 ff.)
34. “Vladislav Surkov razvel demokratiyu” (June 29, 2006), *Kommersant*.
35. Ibid.
36. A similar position was taken by Jin Chunlei, press officer of the Chinese embassy in France, who, responding to an article in which the absence of democracy in China was deplored, wrote: “China could not have continued its continuous growth during more than thirty years in the absence of democracy.” Adding: “A country has not the right to impose its conception of democracy to others, because the reality is different in each [country]” (J. Chunlei (July 7, 2010) “Si, la Chine est une démocratie—Réponse à Guy Sorman, qui dénonce les abus du régime communiste,” *Le Monde*). It is interesting that even China which has not formally given up the monopoly of the Communist Party, claims to be “democratic,” at the same time claiming that this “democracy” should not be judged by universal standards.
37. J. Siegert, “Angriff auf die Pressefreiheit,” in F. Hassel (ed.) (2003) *Der Krieg im Schatten—Russland und Tschetschenien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), p. 167.
38. The story of the “Potemkin Villages” emerged for the first time in dispatches of Georg von Helbig, a Saxon envoy to the court of Catherine, who, however, did not personally participate in Catherine’s tour of Southern Russia. (Cf. M. Heller (1999) *Histoire de la Russie et de son empire* (Paris: Flammarion), p. 591.)
39. According to Simon Sebag Montefiore the myth of the Potemkin villages was invented by Potemkin’s adversaries and skeptical Westerners. “They always presumed that ‘barbaric’ Russians could never really do anything properly,

not like Germans or Frenchmen, so that Potemkin's work must surely be flawed. When it turned out that Potemkin did do things properly and that his achievements appeared almost miraculous in their imagination and execution, jealous Westerners and Russian enemies propagated the big lie of his sham 'Potemkin Villages.'" And, as if to stress Potemkin's achievements, Sebag Montefiore concluded: "The so-called 'Potemkin Villages' are cities today with millions of inhabitants" (S. Sebag Montefiore (2000), *Potemkin—Catherine the Great's Imperial Partner* (New York: Vintage Books), p. 263).

40. Quoted in T. Garton Ash (2004) *Free World—Why a Crisis of the West Reveals the Opportunity of Our Time* (London: Allen Lane), p. 237.
41. Ibid.
42. K. Jaspers (1949) *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Zurich: Artemis Verlag), pp. 215–216.
43. F. Neumann, "Notizen zur Theorie der Diktatur," in Neumann, *Demokratischer und autoritärer Staat—Beiträge zur Soziologie der Politik*, o.c., p. 162.
44. B. Sandberg and M. Schepp (November 28, 2011) "Er will lebenslang regieren," Interview with Boris Nemtsov, *Der Spiegel*, No. 48.
45. R. A. Dahl (1989) *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 316. (My emphasis, MHVH).
46. In April 2008 United Russia formalized the possibility of creating party wings. This led to the formation of three "clubs," two of which, the "Centre for Social and Conservative Policy," and the "State Patriotic Club" openly defend ultra-nationalist and revisionist positions. In the manifesto of the social-conservatives one can read: "We should not consider the present frontiers of our state to be eternal. We are ready for any unification of states on the former territory of the Union, and even beyond its frontiers" (L. Sigal, "Predlozheniya k platforme rossiyskogo sotsialnogo konservativnizma," *Tsentr sotsialno-konservativnoy politiki*. Available at <http://www.cscp.ru/about/manifest/41/>). Also the members of the "State Patriotic Club" do not hide their neo-imperialist ambitions. In the *Political Declaration* they stress "the historical unity of the peoples of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and other brother republics," considering "any attempts to draw frontiers not only on the map, but also in society (...) a great injustice" ("Politicheskaya Deklaratsiya Gosudartsvenno-patrioticheskii Klub Vserossiyskoy politicheskoy partii 'Edinaya Rossiya.'" Available at http://www.gpclub.ru/news/0x1x2_p.html).

10 Putinism and Bonapartism: The Ten Resemblances

1. L-N. Bonaparte (October 12, 1852) "Discours de Bordeaux," *Le Moniteur universel*, in *Oeuvres de Napoléon III*, Tome 3, 1856, pp. 341–344. Available at http://choisel.info/html/histoire/texte_discours_bordeaux.html
2. P. Milza (2004) *Napoléon III* (Paris: Perrin), p. 259.
3. Ibid.
4. S. Schapiro (1949) *Liberalism and the Challenge of Fascism—Social Forces in England and France (1815–1870)* (New York: McGraw-Hill), p. 320.
5. F. Guizot (Autumn 2002) "Le coup d'état du 2 décembre 1851—Lettres à sa fille Henriette," *Commentaire*, No. 99, p. 670.

6. On May 31, 1850 the Assembly had adopted a law that introduced as an additional condition for the right to vote the necessity of having lived in the same place for the last three years. "In a time when artisans and day-labourers constituted a floating population that was constantly on the move," wrote René Rémond, "and when fluctuations in hiring [people] forced a great mass to frequent migrations in search for employment (...) to formulate such a condition means to subtract from the electoral body, maybe, one third and abolish implicitly the principle of universal suffrage" (R. Rémond (1968) *La droite en France — de la Première Restauration à la Ve République*, Tome I, 1815–1940 (Paris: Aubier), pp. 99–100). According to Pierre Rosanvallon "the number of excluded voters approaches 60% in Paris. It was essentially the urban working class (...) that finds itself excluded" (P. Rosanvallon (1992) *Le sacre du citoyen—Histoire du suffrage universel en France* (Paris: Gallimard), p. 402).
7. In the 1851 referendum the percentage of abstentions was 18.35. In the 1852 referendum this percentage was 19.72.
8. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft—Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*, o.c., p. 1094.
9. Cf. V. Hugo, "Napoléon-le-Petit," in V. Hugo (2001) *Écrits politiques*, Anthologie établie et annotée par Franck Laurent (Paris: Livre de poche), p. 183, note 2.
10. Milza, *Napoléon III*, o.c., p. 253.
11. P. Miquel (2008) *Le second empire* (Paris: Perrin), p. 93.
12. In the elections of May 1849 the *Parti de l'Ordre*, a conservative party that was dominated by the two monarchist groupings of Orléanists and Legitimists had obtained a large majority. In 1851 the party would oppose Napoleon's coup d'état. In the next elections, organized on February 29 and March 14, 1852, the party was banned. The Bonapartists obtained 253 from a total of 263 seats. In 1857 they got 276 from a total of 283 seats. In 1863 they got 251 seats from a total of 283. In the last elections, in 1869, however, there was already a whiff of a *fin de régime* in the air: the Bonapartists got 218 out of 289 seats. How gerrymandered the districts were under the Second Empire becomes clear from the fact that in the 1869 legislative elections the Bonapartists only got 57 percent of the popular vote and the opposition (Legitimists and Republicans) 43 percent.
13. E. Gibbon (2004) *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Volume I (Holicong, PA: Wildside Press), p. 410.
14. A. de Tocqueville (2003) *Lettres Choisies, Souvenirs 1814–1859*, F. Mélonio and L. Guellec (eds) (Paris: Gallimard) (Letter to Franz Lieber of August 4, 1852), p. 1045.
15. Ibid.
16. Quoted in Milza, *Napoléon III*, o.c., pp. 122–123.
17. Ibid., p. 248.
18. K. Marx (1969) *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, in Marx Engels Werke (MEW), Bd. 8 (Berlin DDR: Dietz Verlag), p. 115.
19. Ibid., p. 196.
20. Ibid., p. 197.
21. Ibid., p. 198. The farmers were, indeed, the backbone of Napoleon III's reign. It was thanks to the farmers' vote that Napoleon III was elected president in December 1848, profiting from the introduction of universal male suffrage

after the February revolution of 1848. By reintroducing universal male suffrage after the coup, Napoleon III knew that he was rebuilding his own electorate. "Before 1848," wrote Rosanvallon, "political life was concentrated in the cities, especially in Paris, although the French population was three quarter rural" (Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen—Histoire du suffrage universel en France*, o.c., p. 463). The political support of the farmers for the Second Empire led to an anti-farmers sentiment in republican circles (the farmers were depicted as backward, ignorant, and submissive). It even threatened to jeopardize the preservation of universal manhood suffrage in the beginning of the Third Republic.

22. Ibid., p. 204.
23. Quoted by P. Goble (July 7, 2009) "Window on Eurasia: Putin-Medvedev Regime 'Proto-Fascist', Ukrainian Analyst Says," *Window on Eurasia*.
24. Milza, *Napoléon III*, o.c., p. 269.
25. Cf. M. Rubel (1960) *Karl Marx devant le bonapartisme* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton), p. 155.
26. Cf. Hugo, "Napoléon-le-Petit," o.c., p. 183, note 1.
27. Miquel, *Le second empire*, o.c., pp. 68–69.
28. Ibid., p. 71.
29. de Tocqueville, *Lettres Choisies, Souvenirs 1814–1859*, o.c. (Letter to Francisque de Corcelle of May 13, 1852), p. 1038.
30. Milza, *Napoléon III*, o.c., p. 265.
31. Ibid., p. 257.
32. Miquel, *Le second empire*, o.c., p. 93.
33. J-C. Petitfils (1973) *La droite en France de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), p. 43.
34. Milza, *Napoléon III*, o.c., p. 254.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 256. In the same time the number of *gendarmes* in the villages decreased from 24,500 to 23,000. According to Milza the growth of the urban police must be seen against the background of the rapid urbanization in this period.
37. Ibid., pp. 256–257.
38. P. Rosanvallon (2008) *La légitimité démocratique—Impartialité, réflexivité, proximité* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil), p. 305.
39. Ibid., p. 306.
40. Bonaparte, "Discours de Bordeaux," o.c.
41. Petitfils, *La droite en France de 1789 à nos jours*, o.c., p. 42.
42. Ironically, after his final defeat Napoleon I was *himself* treated in a racist way. De Chateaubriand wrote, for instance, with the *dénigrement* of a French nobleman: "One asks oneself with what right a Corsican had just spilled the most beautiful and the most pure blood of France? Did he think that he could replace by his semi-African family the French family that he had just extinguished?" (Quoted in M. Fumaroli, "Le poète et l'empereur," in F-R. de Chateaubriand (1999) *Vie de Napoléon* (Paris: Éditions de Fallois), pp. 12–13.)
43. R. Price (1997) *Napoléon III and the Second Empire* (London: Routledge), p. 6.
44. Cf. E. Traverso, "The idea of totalitarianism finds its origins in the context created by the historical break of the Great War which, before Mussolini and

- Hitler, was already a 'total war'" (E. Traverso, "Introduction. Le totalitarisme. Jalons pour l'histoire d'un débat," in E. Traverso (ed.) (2001) *Le Totalitarisme—le XXe siècle en débat* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil), p. 9).
45. A. J. P. Taylor described the fast increasing government intervention during the war as follows: "The First World War was, in some ways, much greedier of munitions than the Second (...). Factories sprang up all over Europe solely to feed it. This demanded little short of an industrial revolution. New industries, and with them a new economic system, had to be created almost overnight. Workers were persuaded to change their jobs and to relax their peacetime standards. Employers worked to government order" (A. J. P. Taylor (1963) *The First World War* (London: Penguin), pp. 49–50).
 46. J. Horne, "Introduction: Mobilizing for 'Total War', 1914–1918," in J. Horne (ed.) (1997) *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 3.
 47. Ibid., p. 4.
 48. The terms *fascismo autoritario* and *fascismo totalitario* are used by Emilio Gentile. (E. Gentile (2008) *La via italiana al totalitarismo—Il partito e lo Stato nel regime fascista* (Roma: Carocci editore), p. 142.)
 49. Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo—Il partito e lo Stato nel regime fascista*, o.c., p. 143. (Emphasis in original).
 50. Ibid. Emphasis in the original.
 51. Petitfils, *La droite en France de 1789 à nos jours*, o.c., p. 47.
 52. Ibid.
 53. Fumaroli, "Le poète et l'empereur," o.c., p. 20.
 54. Milza, *Napoléon III*, o.c., p. 262.
 55. Bonaparte, "Discours de Bordeaux," o.c.
 56. Milza, *Napoléon III*, o.c., p. 264.
 57. Ibid., p. 262.
 58. Hugo, "Napoléon-le-Petit," o.c., p. 189.
 59. Rémond, *La droite en France—de la Première Restauration à la Ve République*, Tome I, 1815–1940, o.c., p. 112.
 60. This independence of the Catholic church could, however, have been jeopardized if Napoleon could have fulfilled his plan to build a residence in Paris for the Pope in a palace near the Notre-Dame. (Cf. Milza, *Napoléon III*, o.c., p. 416.)
 61. When the files of the KGB were (temporarily) opened in the fall of 1991, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Aleksey, "had been exposed as an agent (code-named 'Drozdov') of the KGB, who'd even been nominated for a KGB medal" (Albats, *The State within the State—The KGB and Its Hold on Russia—Past, Present, and Future*, o.c., p. 314).
 62. Beetham, *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics*, o.c., p. 186.
 63. Milza, *Napoléon III*, o.c., p. 307.
 64. Bonaparte, "Discours de Bordeaux," o.c.
 65. Rubel, *Karl Marx devant le bonapartisme*, o.c., p. 47.
 66. M. Winock (2004) *Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil), p. 201.
 67. de Tocqueville, *Lettres Choiesies, Souvenirs 1814–1859*, o.c. (Letter to Francisque de Corcelle of May 13, 1852), p. 1036.
 68. Rubel, *Karl Marx devant le bonapartisme*, o.c., p. 97.

69. Winock, *Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France*, o.c., p. 202.
70. Ibid., p. 203.
71. F. Neumann, "Angst und Politik," in F. Neumann (1978) *Wirtschaft, Staat, Demokratie—Aufsätze 1930–1954*, edited by A. Söllner (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), p. 434.
72. This dissatisfaction should not be underestimated. In November 2005, when Putin had served almost six years as president in a period of economic boom, respondents were asked to characterize the existing Russian state and compare it with the Soviet state at the end of the 1970s/beginning of the 1980s. The differences are striking:

Close to the people (Russian state: 5% and Soviet state: 34%)

Lawful (resp. 9% and 28%)

Just (resp. 3% and 20%)

Honest, Open (resp. 3% and 13%)

Criminal (resp. 62% and 12%)

Source: Lev Gudkov and Boris Dubin, "Posttotalitarnyi sindrom: 'Upravlyayemaya Demokratiya' i apatiya mass" (Post-Totalitarian Syndrome: "Managed Democracy" and the Apathy of the Masses), in M. Lipman and A. Ryabov (eds) (2007) *Puti rossiyskogo postkommunizma—oчерki* (Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), p. 50).

11 Putinism and Berlusconi

1. Silvio Berlusconi to the (then) German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder at the Brussels summit at the end of Italy's EU Presidency, December 2003. "Quotes: Italy's Silvio Berlusconi in his own words," *BBC*. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15642201>
2. Cf. "Russia's Super Rich Feel at Home on Sardinia." Available at <http://engforum.pravda.ru/index.php?/topic/72756-russias-super-rich-feel-at-home-on-sardinia/>. Cf. also Boris Reitschuster (2008) *Der neue Herr im Kreml? Dmitrii Medwedew* (Berlin: Econ), p. 221.
3. A. Politkovskaya (2007) *Putin's Russia—Life in a Failing Democracy* (New York: A Metropolitan / Owl Book), p. 232.
4. Cf. Lucas, *The New Cold War—Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West*, o.c., p. 15.
5. N. Petrov, "The Nomenklatura and the Elite," in M. Lipman and N. Petrov (eds) (2011) *Russia in 2020—Scenarios for the Future* (Washington, DC and Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), p. 517. Berlusconi finds himself here among heavyweights of the regime, such as Kudrin, Fursenko, Abramovich, Sechin, and Sobyenin.
6. Q. Peel (April 17, 2008) "Business Ties Bind Putin to Berlusconi," *Financial Times*.
7. A. Come (March 4, 2011) "On Putin, Berlusconi and Chimpanzees," *openDemocracy*.
8. A. Gylden and A. Chevelkina (October 15, 2011) "Super-Poutine—héros de com," *L'Express*, No. 3144.

9. W. Stewart and L. Eccles (September 27, 2011) "From Russia with Botox: Has Putin had a Facelift ... or Just Plenty of Sleep? Mystery as Bags Under Eyes Vanish," *MailOnline*.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. A. Ignatius (December 19, 2007) "A Tsar Is Born," *Time*.
13. Belpoliti, *Berlusconi—Le corps du chef*, o.c., p. 50.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
15. www.eni.com
16. R. Evans, L. Harding, and J. Hooper (December 2, 2010) "WikiLeaks Cables: Berlusconi 'Profited from Secret Deals' with Putin," *The Guardian*.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Cf. P. Ginsborg (2001) *Italy and Its Discontents—Family, Civil Society, State, 1980–2001* (London and New York: Penguin Books), p. 317.
19. N. Bobbio, "Separatismo liberale," in N. Bobbio (2008) *Contro i nuovi dispotismi—Scritti sul berlusconismo* (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo), p. 13.
20. P. Ginsborg (2005) *Silvio Berlusconi: Television, Power and Patrimony* (London: Verso), p. 156. Ginsborg gives the following example of the new text that follows "objective criteria." The text refers to the first decades of Italian unity after 1870: "The men of the Right were aristocrats and great landowners. They entered politics with the sole intention of serving the State (...). The men of the Left, on the other hand, are [note change of tense] professionals, entrepreneurs and lawyers, ready to further their careers in any way" (*ibid.*).
21. P. Musso (2011) *Sarkoberlusconisme—la crise finale?* (La Tour d'Aigues: Éditions de l'aube), p. 51.
22. When, in a survey in the spring of 1994, Italians were asked, if Italy today needed a strong man, "73.5 per cent of the respondents declared that they were 'quite in agreement' or 'very much in agreement'. Such an opinion was fairly evenly spread across different ages, but in terms of geographical area, the South and the islands were most in favour (mainland South, 78.5 per cent, Sicily and Sardinia, 81.8 per cent)." (Cf. Ginsborg, *Italy and Its Discontents—Family, Civil Society, State, 1980–2001*, o.c., p. 296.)
23. N. Farrell (September 13, 2003) "Diary," *The Spectator*.
24. N. Squires (May 28, 2010) "Silvio Berlusconi Compares Himself to Mussolini," *The Telegraph*.
25. In November 2003, when Fini visited Israel as deputy Prime Minister, he would categorize Mussolini's racial laws as "infamous." (Cf. G. Anselmi (November 25, 2003) "L'uscita di Fini dall'ambiguità," *La Repubblica*).
26. In March 2009 Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* and Fini's *Alleanza Nazionale* merged into the party *Il Popolo della Libertà* (The People of Freedom). The party, however, split in July 2010, when Fini was expelled. He then founded a new party, *Futuro e Libertà* (Future and Freedom).
27. N. Bobbio, "Quell'Italia modello Berlusconi," in Bobbio, *Contro i nuovi dispotismi—Scritti sul berlusconismo*, o.c., p. 15.
28. P. Ginsborg (2010) *Salviamo Italia* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore), p. 102.
29. R. Simone (2010) *Il Mostro Mite—Perché l'Occidente non va a sinistra* (Milano: Garzanti), pp. 71–72.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

31. Ibid., pp. 72–73.
32. According to Karl Polanyi, “the inability of the world market to absorb Russia’s agricultural produce, forced her reluctantly into the paths of self-sufficiency. Socialism in one country was brought about by the incapacity of market economy to provide a link between all countries; what appeared as Russian autarchy was merely the passing of capitalist internationalism” (K. Polanyi (1957) *The Great Transformation—The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, with an introduction by R. M. MacIver (Boston: Beacon Press), p. 248).
33. A. Gibelli (2011) *Berlusconi ou la démocratie autoritaire* (Paris: Éditions Belin), p. 128.
34. Quoted in Ignatius, “A Tsar is Born,” o.c.
35. Cf. A. Blomfield (December 21, 2007) “\$40 bn Putin ‘is Now Europe’s Richest Man’”, *The Telegraph*.
36. A. Higgins, G. Chazan, and A. Cullison (June 11, 2008) “Secretive Associate of Putin Emerges as Czar of Russian Oil Trading,” *The Wall Street Journal*.
37. Ibid.
38. “Milliarder Timchenko, ‘drug Putina’, stal odnim iz krupneyshikh v mire prodavtsov nefti” (Billionnaire Timchenko, ‘the Friend of Putin’, Became One of the Biggest Oil Sellers in the World) (November 1, 2007), *NEWSru.com*.
39. Website Gunvor <http://www.gunvorgroup.com/> retrieved on April 6, 2011.
40. “Milliarder Timchenko, ‘drug Putina,’ stal odnim iz krupneyshikh v mire prodavtsov nefti,” o.c.
41. C. Clover (December 2, 2010) “Oil Trading Group Gunvor Denies Putin Links,” *Financial Times*.
42. “Grease My Palm,” (November 27, 2008) *The Economist*. The contested passage has been removed from the article on the website of *The Economist*. The original text, however, is still available at <http://www.wordofsouth.com/myblock/showthread.php?70375-Bribery-and-Corruption-in-Russia>. In another article *The Economist* analyzed possible market manipulation by Gunvor in the period January 2005–May 2009 which could have helped the company to buy oil in Russia cheaply and earn inflated profits on the international market. Such a policy, wrote the magazine, “could have harmed the country’s citizens, who benefit from oil taxes” (“Gunvor—Riddles, Mysteries and Enigmas” (May 5, 2012), *The Economist*).
43. C. Stewart (July 10, 2008) “Bank Rossiya Emerges From Shadows,” *Moscow Times*.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Cf. M. Jégo (April 6, 2011) “Confrontée à une fuite record de capitaux, la Russie tente de moderniser son économie,” *Le Monde*.
47. “Foreign News: Mafia Trial” (October 24, 1927), *Time*.
48. Ibid.
49. F. Varese (1994) “Is Sicily the Future of Russia? Private Protection and the Rise of the Russian Mafia,” *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, Vol. XXXV, pp. 224–258.
50. Ibid., p. 226: “From 1812 to 1860, the number of landowners of large estates in Sicily went from 2,000 to 20,000; from 1860 to 1900, the number of hectares in private hands increased from 250,000 to 650,000.”
51. Ibid., p. 244.

52. Ginsborg, *Salviamo l'Italia*, o.c., p. 18.
53. Ibid. In 1986 it was estimated "that some 12.5 per cent of Italian GDP was the fruit of all types of criminal activity, of which nearly half was from the commerce of drugs" (Ginsborg, *Italy and Its Discontents*, o.c., p. 201).
54. "An Italian Story" (April 26, 2001), *The Economist*.
55. Ibid.
56. M. Naím (May–June 2012) "Mafia States—Organized Crime Takes Office," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 3, p. 104.
57. Ibid., p. 103.
58. "Olga Kryshstanovskaya: Putin vernetsya, kak don mafii," *Svobodnaya Pressa*, February 8, 2011.
59. Evans, Harding, and Hooper, "WikiLeaks Cables: Berlusconi 'Profited from Secret Deals' with Putin," o.c.
60. M. B. Khodorkovsky (January 29, 2010) "A Time and a Place for Russia," *The New York Times*.
61. S. Schmemmann (November 22, 2011) "A Discussion of Russia's Future is Long on Pessimism," *The New York Times*.

12 Putinism: A Hybrid Mixture of Mussolinian Fascism, Bonapartism, and Berlusconiism

1. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation—The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, o.c., p. 239.
2. H. Samuel (September 2, 2010) "Winston Churchill 'Ordered Assassination of Mussolini to Protect Compromising Letters,'" *The Telegraph*.
3. G. Kasparov (2008) *How Life Imitates Chess—Insights to Life as a Game of Strategy* (London: Arrow Books), p. 117.
4. Former French Prime Minister François Fillon belonged to this dwindling minority. In November 2009 he declared: "Today Russia is a democracy."
5. We need to distinguish between neo-fascist, post-fascist, and populist parties. Neo-fascist parties fully adopt the legacy of inter-war era fascism. Post-fascist parties, on the contrary, are parties that—after having accepted this legacy—reject it and enter the democratic mainstream. A good example of the latter is the Alleanza Nazionale of Gianfranco Fini. A populist party, on the contrary, is a reaction to contemporary developments—especially immigration. Populist parties, having never accepted the legacy of inter-war era fascism, feel no need to distance themselves from it. They may, however, share some characteristics and policy goals with post-fascist and neo-fascist parties.
6. Cf. D. Trenin (2011) *Post-Imperium—A Eurasian Story* (Washington, DC and Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), p. 46.
7. "God Sent Putin to Russia, Claims Surkov" (July 11, 2011), *The Moscow News*.
8. L. Fuller (October 20, 2011) "Why Does the Russian Army Need a Lot More Snipers?" *rferl.org*.
9. E. Barry (June 5, 2012) "Russian Lawmakers Take Steps to Impose Steep Fines on Demonstrators," *The New York Times*.

10. A. Sidorenko, "Society and the State on the Internet: A Call for Change," in Lipman and Petrov, *Russia in 2020—Scenarios for the Future*, o.c., p. 574.
11. Ibid., p. 575.
12. V. Kodachigov (March 4, 2008) "Slushat podano," *Kommersant*.
13. U. Rapetto and R. Di Nunzio (2001) *Le Nuove Guerre—Dalla Cyberwar ai Black Bloc. Dal sabotaggio mediatico a Bin Laden* (Milano: RCS Libri), p. 148.
14. Vladimir Putin (February 27, 2012), "Rossiya i menyayushchiysya mir", (Russia and the Changing World), *Moskovskie Novosti*.
15. Ellen Barry (July 2, 2012), "Foreign-Funded Nonprofits in Russia Face New Hurdle," *The New York Times*.
16. Rachel Denber (September 28, 2012), "The Kremlin May Call It Treason," *The Huffington Post*.
17. Ibid.

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